



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

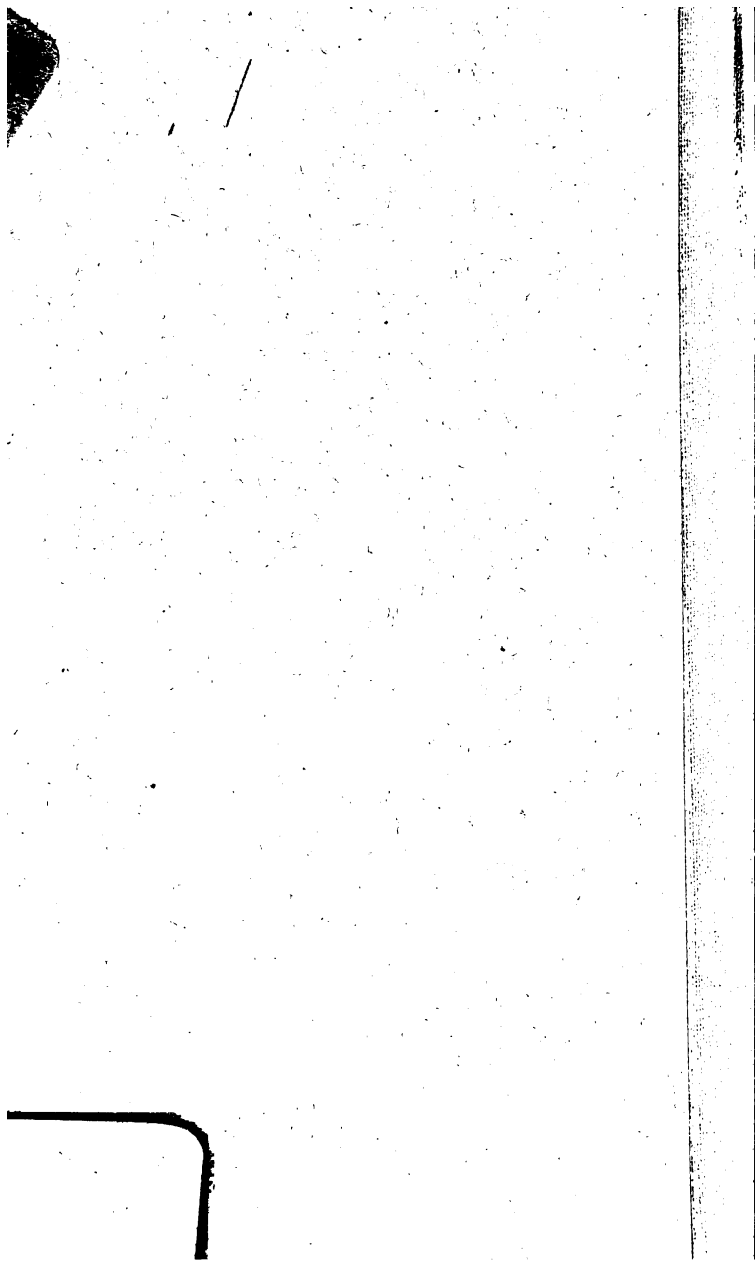
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

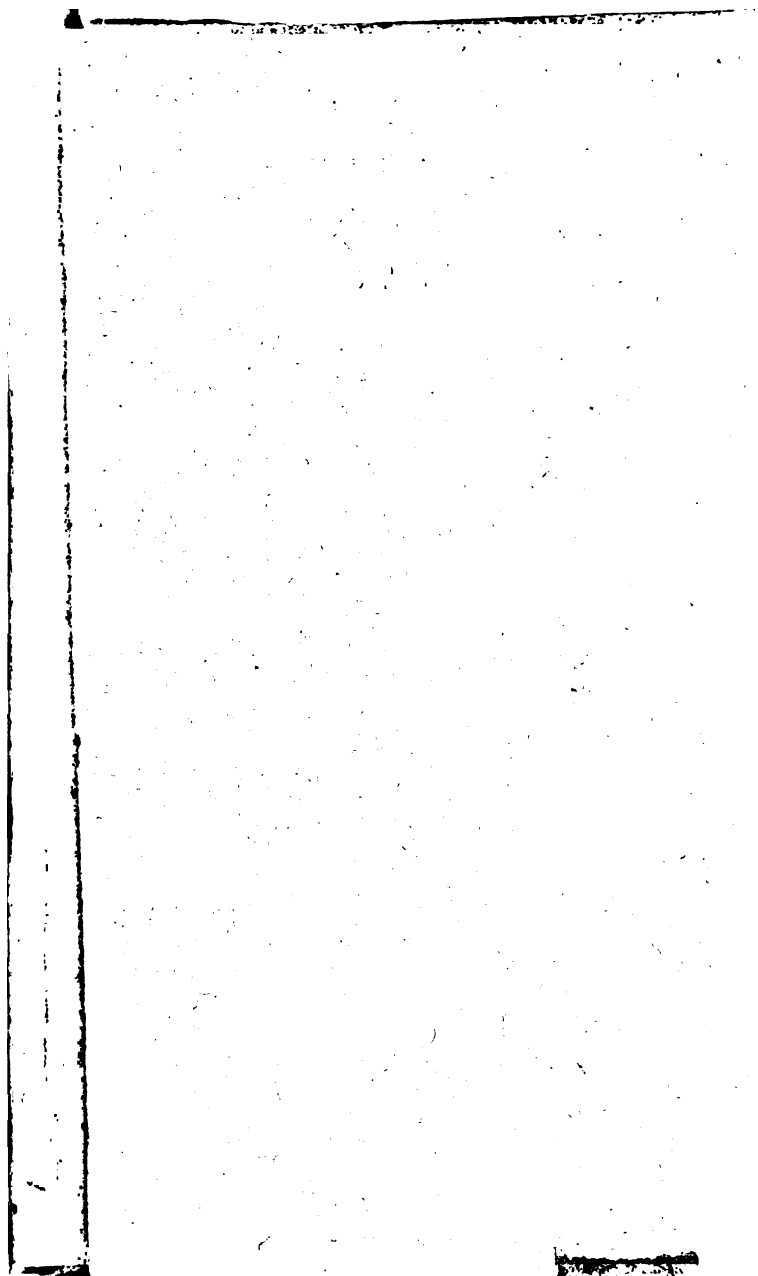
We also ask that you:

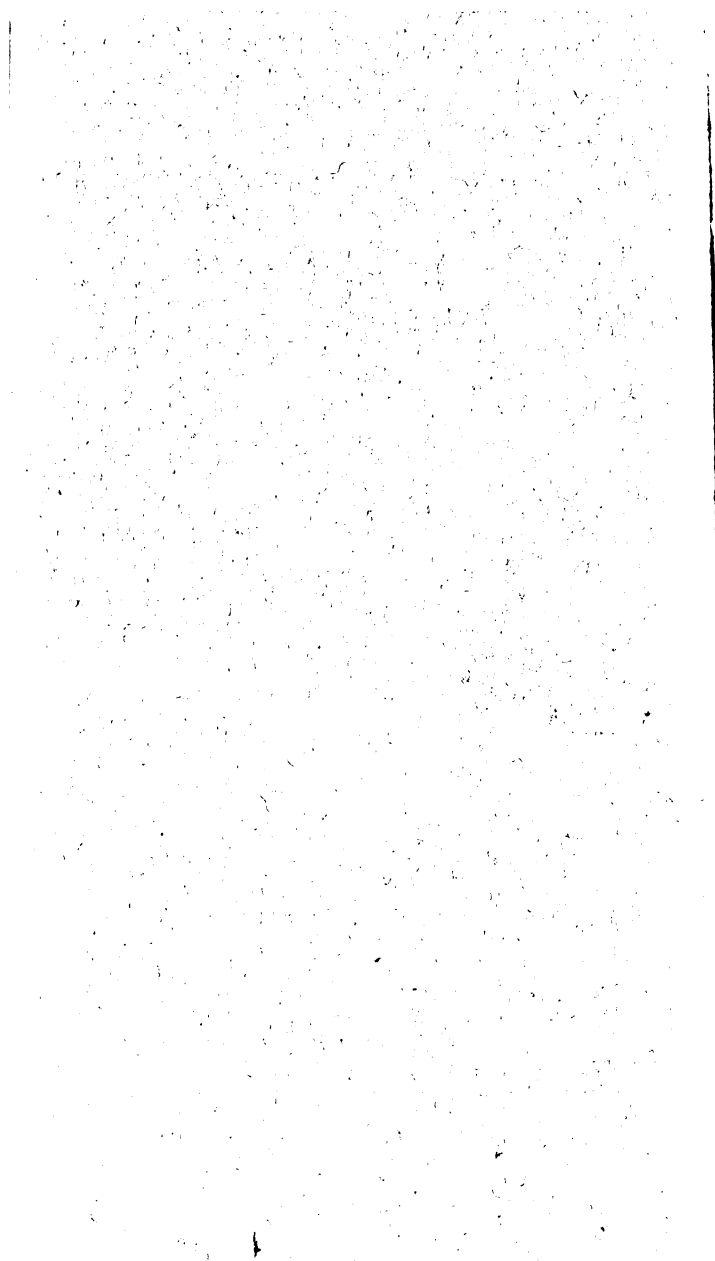
- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





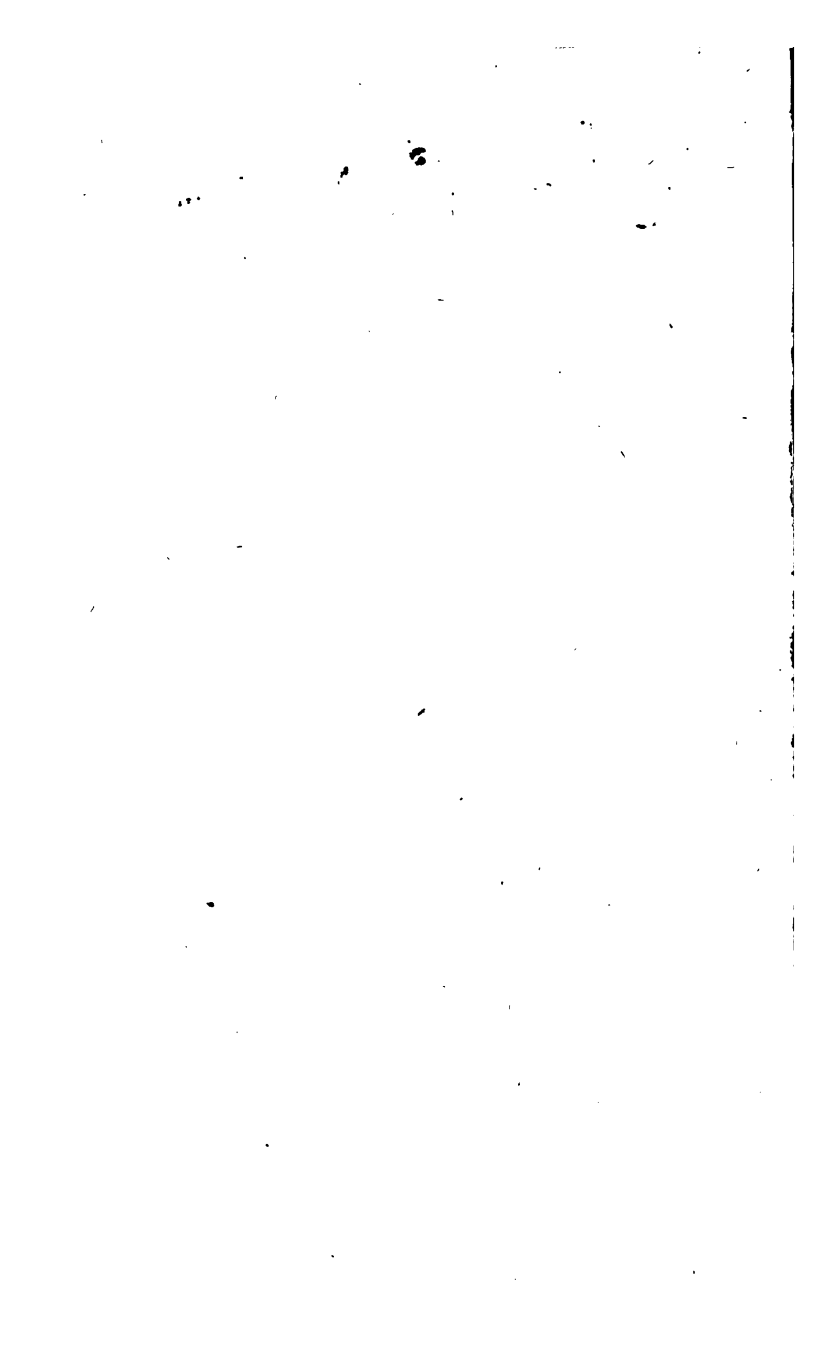




3

Chas. P. Daly

N. W.
MAY 22





Presented by

UNICK.

Mrs. Henry R. Hoyt,

to the

New York Public Library

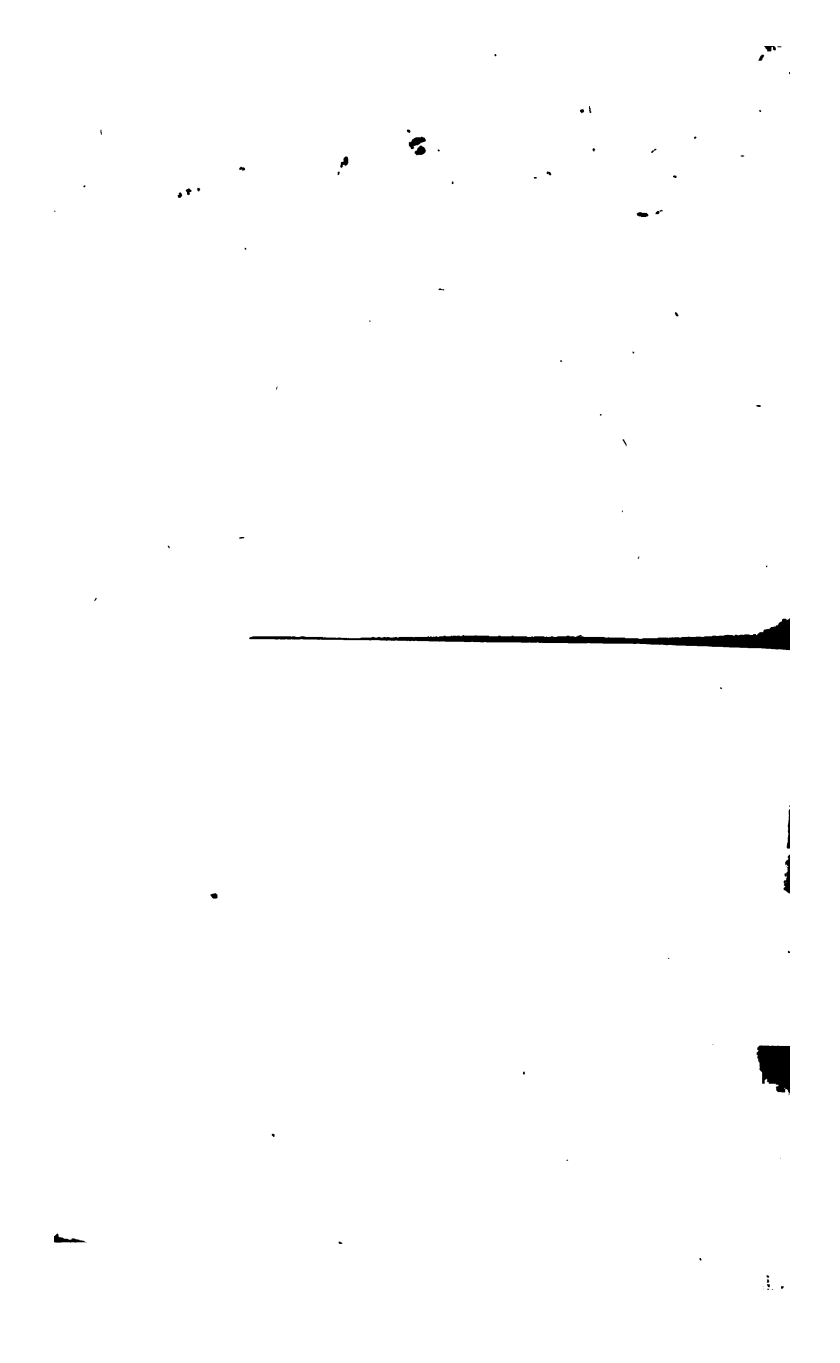
NOVICE OF ST. DOMINICK.

Presented by

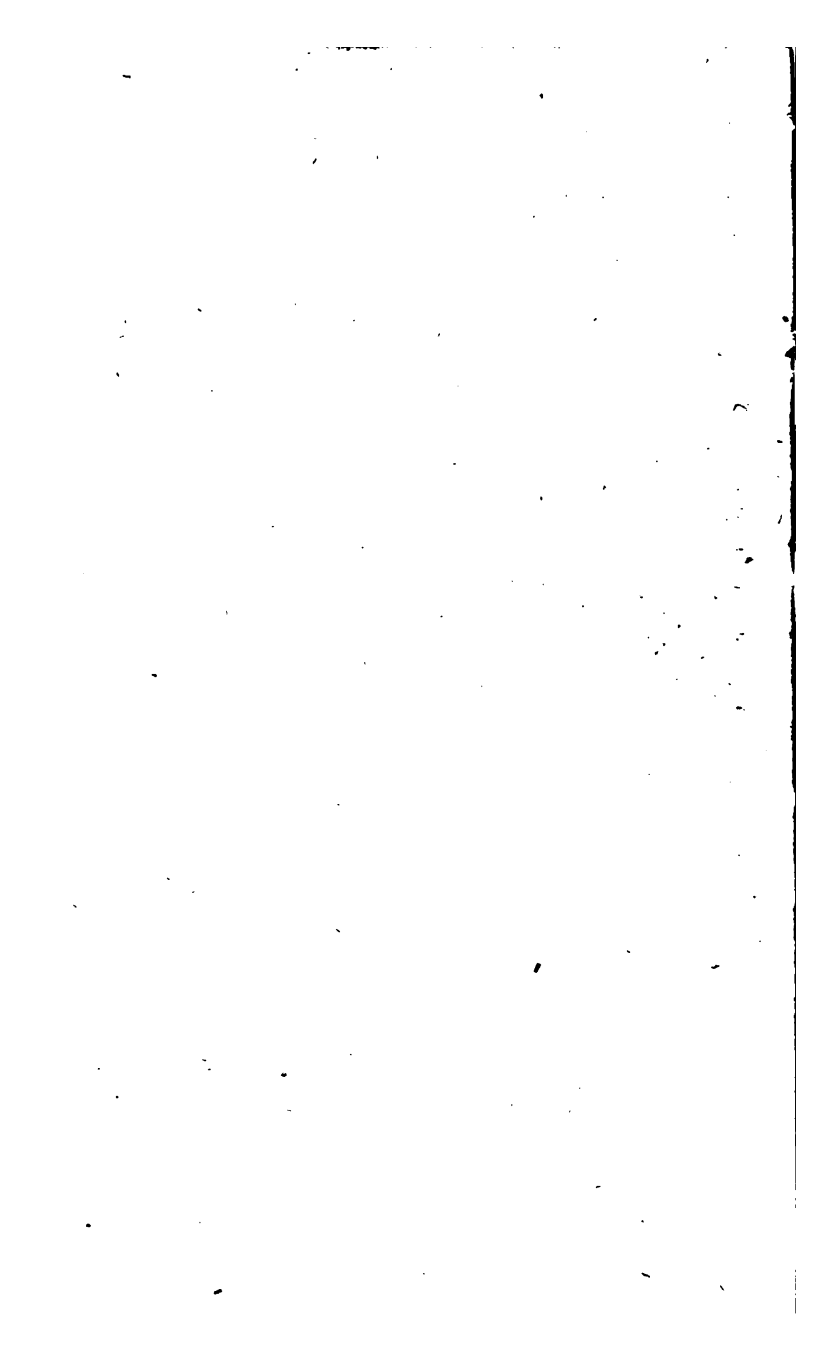
Mrs. Henry R. Hoyt,

to the

New York Public Library



NOVICE OF ST. DOMINICK.



THE
NOVICE
OF
SAINT DOMINICK.

BY MISS OWENSON,
AUTHOR OF THE WILD IRISH GIRL, &c.

For *Truth* and *Good* are one;
And *Beauty* dwells in them, and they in her,
With like participation. *Akenside.*

Forse se tu gustasse anco una volta,
La milissima parte delle Geoje,
Che gusto un core amato riamando,
Aireste repentita Sospirando,
Perduto e tutto il tempo,
Che, in amor non se spenda. *Tasso.*

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

PRINTED FOR AND PUBLISHED BY T. S. MANNING,
NO. 143 NORTH THIRD STREET,
PHILADELPHIA.

1807.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

241375

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.
1901

Saml.

THE

Elliott

NOVICE OF SAINT DOMINICK.

CHAP. I.

Can you speak Greek?

No certainly! Get you gone then,
And talk of stars, and firmaments, and firedrakes.
Do you remember who was Adam's schoolmaster,
And who taught Eve to spin? She knows all these,
And will run you all over the world
As familiar as a fiddler.—

Can you sit seven hours together and say nothing?
Which she will do, and when she speaks
Speaks oracles: speaks things that no man
Understands; no, nor herself either.

BEAUMONT and FLETCHER.

THE sharp reproof of the pious and learned lady Magdelaine de Montmorell still shone on her keen eye, though it had ceased to murmur on her lip. The little amanuensis received it in silence, hung her head, and sighed—she dared not weep. One solitary intrusive tear alone had escaped from her eye, and glittered on the glowing surface of her cheek, like the dew-drop which the power of repulsion scarcely suffers to embalm the bosom of the rose it spangles. The little amanuensis brushed it lightly off with the feather of her pen, and waited in patient silence till the inspirations of the lady Magdelaine should again command its efforts.

The lady Magdelaine had already spent four years in composing a voluminous History of the Crusades, whether foreign or domestic, against infidel or apostate, from the first instigation of Peter the Hermit in 1104 to the massacre of St. Bartholomew in 1572; of the latter she had herself been a witness. She had retired from

Paris to the chateau de Montmorell, which rose on the northern skirts of the forest of Champagne, as a residence more appropriate to the pursuits of one who expected to unite the heathen reputation of an Anna de Commynes with the holy fame of a Saint Geneviève: and solitude and a total sequestration from the world, together with the convent-library of the Dominican sisters (then rich in legendary lore and pious tradition), gave boundless scope to the profound meditations of philosophy, and favoured the deep researches of history; and while, with kindling ardour, fanaticism traced the recorded horrors of religious frenzy in the gloomy "deeds of other times," France still groaned under the struggling efforts of religious prejudice, or bled beneath the uplifted sword of civil dissension.

It was on the eve of St. Theodora the Martyr, and a few days after Henry the Fourth had invested Neufchatel, that a later hour than usual still found the lady Magdelaine in her study, dictating to her young secretary the most remarkable circumstances of the siege of Beziers, where six thousand obstinate heretics were put to the sword in cold blood, and four hundred committed to the flames, for the *love of God*. It was a note panegyric and elucidatory on this instance of religious ardour, which had drawn from the horror-struck amanuensis (a young novice of the order of St. Dominick) such animadversions as seldom failed to elicit the disapprobation of her patroness, and rouse every feeling of pious zeal into action. It was some time ere the lady Magdelaine could rally back that abstracted attention which the unanswerable, but not unproved, comments of the little secretary had put to flight. A glance into a page of the seraphic doctor, St. Bonaventure, restored the train of her dissipated ideas; and, determined to finish her note with an animated apostrophe, she exultingly exclaimed: "Oh! fortunate though deluded creatures, who by the pious zeal of your holy persecutors were forced to return to the fold from whence you strayed!"—"And did they turn, madam, (interrupted the novice) to the faith they had abjured?"—"They were all put to death without distinction," said the lady Magdelaine. "Kill away, cried

the bishop of Citeaux, God will take care of his own!"—"Then what became of the bishop of Citeaux?" demanded the secretary:

The lady Magdelaine, again immersed in a learned puzzle, made no reply; but cast up her eye, pinched the folds of her ruff, and bit her nails, in vain endeavours to lure back the truant and felicitous thought which was to round the period of her apostrophe: and while the brain of learned dulness in vain gave the torture to exhausted memory, the vivid thought of genius darted through regions of impossibility, and pursued with ardour the glowing phantoms of fancy's creation. And thine was a genius, young Novice of St. Dominick, that soared far beyond the occupation allotted thee: and thine was an age when the mastery of the attention is seldom obtained; when the mind will admit an image or embrace an idea wholly foreign from the pursuit in which it is engaged, because it steals on its apprehension under the glowing form of joys anticipated, or wears the pensive, grateful semblance of joys elapsed: happy age!

The brain of the lady Magdelaine still pursued with unwearied diligence the learned trifle that distracted it, while the vagrant fancy of the little amanuensis wandered through scenes of fairy reflection. And never did a strain breathe in stronger unison to a soft and fanciful idea than that which stole on the rapt attention of the young secretary, as, tracing viewless characters with the feather of her pen, she

"gave to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name."

The storm raged loud, yet in every intervening pause the melodious tones of a harp were more distinctly heard. Panting and breathless, the Novice arose, crept softly to the casement, raised herself on a small stool, and flung an inquiring glance through its painted sash; but the stained and narrow panes, lit up by the watery beams of a declining moon, gave no form to her eager eye, except that of an ancient dame of the family de Montmorell praying with sympathetic piety before the faded figure of her lord in armour.

Yet if her eye was ungratified by the sight of the musician, her ear more distinctly caught the strain, which at first faintly breathed at a distance, now lingered on every passing breeze, now directly ascended from the terrace beneath the casement, and now, gradually fading away, became lost amid the loud howling of the wind.

Rapt, entranced, the little amanuensis still remained at the casement, even long after the magic spell which had lured her thither was dissolved; while fancy still fed her ear with those tones which distance or the storm had lulled into silence, and amazement was busied in assigning a cause for an effect so singular, so delightful. But even fancy at last ceased to delude; and Imogen, with a sigh of disappointment, returned to her seat at the moment when the lady Magdelaine, starting from hers, exclaimed, "I must consult the bishop of Beauvais."

"Did you not hear the sound of music, madam?" demanded Imogen.—"Music!" said the lady Magdelaine, mechanically speaking the word with a tone and air of abstraction, that denoted her absence of mind and her inattention to the demand.

"To me it breathed no human sound," said the amanuensis, "but such as fancy gives to those ærial strains which waft the souls of dying saints to heaven. In good sooth, it thrilled upon my heart: e'en now methinks I hear it."—"What?" demanded the lady Magdelaine, awakened.—"Hush! I am not deceived. Yet methinks 'tis in the castle: it steals along the corridor; do you not hear it, madam?"

The lady Magdelaine (whose auricular faculties were somewhat less acute than those of her companion) now for the first time heard those strains which had never awakened raptures beneath the steady tenor of her philosophic mind: they had indeed awakened emotions of a very different nature; and, advancing to a distant part of the chamber, she drew back a sliding door, which opened on the corridor that surrounded the servants' hall. The grand-dame of the present lady de Montmorell had constructed this door for the purpose of obtaining secret information of all the politics of her domestic system.

The lady Magdelaine, whose imagination was less on the *qui vive* than that of her young secretary, readily believed that these mysterious strains were not only of human sound, but that they proceeded from some unlicensed merriment in her domestics; and now appropriated the sliding-door to a purpose it had served, for two generations back, to the ladies de Montmorell. Instantly the tones of a harp, accompanied by a fine voice, interrupted by repeated and loud bursts of laughter, arose from the great hall below. Imogen, followed by the lady Magdelaine, sprung forward; and, hanging over the balustrade, with a heart beating in unison to the lively air which had awakened its palpitation, observed the musician surrounded by a group who paid the tribute of boisterous applause to the talents he exerted for their entertainment. Followed by the reluctant and delighted Imogen, the lady Magdelaine, with noiseless step, returned in silence to her study, closed the slide, and rung with some violence the little silver bell which lay on her table; but no ready page obeyed the summons. "Theodore may be asleep," said Imogen, timidly contemplating the storm that gloomed the countenance of the lady Magdelaine, and threatened a temporary overthrow to her philosophy; "shall I go and awaken him, madam?"

The lady Magdelaine, in sullen silence, took a taper, and proceeded to the anti-chamber. Before the dying embers of a wood fire, stretched at his full length, lay the young page, who had read himself to sleep over the Romance of the Rose. "Why, thou mortal Morpheus!" exclaimed the lady Magdelaine in a Stentorian voice. The youth, roused by the well-known tone, started on his feet, rubbed his eyes, scratched his head, bowed, and stammered. "Say," continued his lady, "wouldst thou emulate the drowsy powers of Epimenides, and sleep away thy useless life?"—"So please my lady, I thought"—"You thought! But every vassal now arrogates the divine faculty of thinking. Bethink thee then of delivering my commands to those rioters who by such rude was-sailage disturb the nocturnal meditations of their lady."

The page, scarce half awakened, stood motionless and gaping. "Avaunt!" said the lady Magdelaine, "and

summon to my presence that hoary reveller, the sieur Ambrose." The page trembling, bowing, and yawning, went to seek the *maître-d'hôtel*; and the lady Magdelaine returned to her study, where Imogen was still listening to those sounds which found admittance through an aperture in the sliding door. "For twenty years," said the lady Magdelaine, throwing herself into her chair, "for twenty years the sound of ill-managed mirth, or rude merriment, has not been heard till this night within the walls de Montmorell!"—"I can well believe it," sighed Imogen.—"I shall soon learn who this modern Orpheus is," continued her ladyship.

"So shall I, I hope," said Imogen.

"I should not wonder if it was a spy of that arch heretic—the king of Navarre," exclaimed lady Magdelaine.

"I should have no objection though it were," thought Imogen.

"The province is full of his emissaries and his troops," said the lady Magdelaine.

"Heaven prosper the hero in all his undertakings!" silently ejaculated Imogen.

"The Leaguers," added the lady Magdelaine, "are dilatory in their operations; while they should recollect, that during the Trojan wars, and those carried on by the Greeks against Darius and Xerxes,— Here the entrance of the *maître-d'hôtel*, followed by the greater part of the domestics of the chateau, interrupted the learned harangue of the lady Magdelaine. The young page, peevish for having been awakened from a delicious dream, which placed him first page of the presence to queen Margaret de Valois, in a manner not likely to reward him for the loss of so pleasing a delusion, and disappointed at having missed the entertainment he found his fellow-servants enjoying, delivered his lady's orders with such exaggerating additions of her displeasure, that old Ambrose, who dared not singly encounter her wrath, had prevailed on some of the domestics to share the punishment as they had shared the pleasure of the crime.

The appearance of the *maître-d'hôtel* revived the sparks of anger which the digression of the lady Magdelaine from the king of Navarre to the Trojans, Greeks

and Persians, had nearly extinguished; and after a pause of a minute she exclaimed, in a tone of reprehension and solemnity: "When the peaceful influence of *Morpheus*, so finely described by Homer, should spread the pinions of repose o'er the eyes of mortals, save those spirits of higher order, who by the lamp's pale beam pore over the inspirations of departed genius, or raise amidst the silence of midnight gloom monuments to perpetuate their own, say, what means this nocturnal was-sailage within the walls of the chateau de Montmorell? It is to thee, thou hoary president of midnight revelry, I address myself."—"I! good my lady," stammered Ambrose: "with my lady's good pleasure, the saints are witness, I never was a president: the Virgin forbid I should ever be a president!"

"Say," continued the lady Magdelaine, "do you celebrate the orgies of the household gods, perform ye Bacchanalian mysteries, or hold you the riotous Saturnalia?" The servants, in silent and ignorant amazement, stared in each others' faces. "Speak," continued the lady Magdelaine, "who is this insidious promoter of midnight revelry, this Amphiön, this Terpander, who, like the musicians of old, has charmed e'en stocks and stones?"

"So please my lady," said Ambrose, bowing, "he is no trepanner, but a poor minstrel, a troubadour of Provence,* who erst-while begged shelter at the postern-gate from the storm, in the name of our Lady of the Snow. Marry, an it had been a dog, one's bowels would have yearned to turn him adrift o' such a night."

"*Troubadour!*" repeated the lady Magdelaine: "O thou second Cymon! thou dotard, more stupid than Polyphemus! When heresy stalks abroad, and threatens our holy faith with destruction; when anarchy and civil war tear the very bosom of our country; are we to admit into the very *sanctum sanctorum* of our chateau, every Hugonot spy who assumes the disguise of an itinerant votarist of Apollo? This minstrel, this troubadour, may be the

* "Au sein de cette barbarie naquirent en Provence nos premiers poëtes, connus sous le nom du Troubadour." *Histoire de France, Louis Jeune*, chap. 7.

very spirit of Luther, under the power of transmigration; it may be heterodoxy personified; it may be Satan himself roaming about, and seeking, in these irreligious times, so favourable to his reign, all those whom he may devour." The servants crossed themselves devoutly; all but the little Beatrice, who had the honour to preside over the tapestry-looms of the lady Magdelaine.

"Satan!" repeated Beatrice: "in good sooth, my lady, he looks more like an angel than a devil, saints keep us!"

"Peace, shamless Bacchante!" exclaimed the lady Magdelaine: "and thou, monsieur Ambrose, stop this minstrelsy, and instantly dismiss this modern Arion."—"Poor youth!" said Ambrose: "St. Denis be his speed! for it blows a piteous storm, and the night is as black as pitch."

"Youth!" reiterated Imogen; "youth! is he young? I thought all troubadours and minstrels were old and blind, with long and flowing beards."—"Mademoiselle, he has no more beard than my hand, save indeed as handsome a pair of whiskers"—"As any cavalier in the province of Champagne might wish to wear," added Beatrice. "Blind, forsooth! Marry, if there is such another pair of black eyes in France I'll give my silver reliquary for a copper sous!"

"Beatrice," said the lady Magdelaine, "dost thou not fear the fate of Canente, who was changed into a voice for talking too much?"

"*She!* good my lady," said Ambrose: "beshrew me if she fears any thing, not excepting the devil, father Anselm, or your ladyship. I told the damsels it was not seemly to press round the youth as they did."—"Marry, didst thou so, monsieur Propriety," interrupted Beatrice; "but did you consider then, that it was so long since we saw any thing young and handsome in the chateau, that we came to look at him, not as a man, but a wonder!"—"Beatrice," said the lady Magdelaine, in a softened tone, "it is easy to perceive you are not of the Pythagorean school; but"—"She at school!" said Ambrose: "Mass! she would corrupt a nunnery!"—"But the question is," continued the lady Magdelaine, "whether this musical Adonis should be dismissed, or retained a prisoner till

the return of the father director, who is gone to shrieve the ladies of St. Dominick?"—"Poor dear souls!" said Beatrice: "I wonder what they can have to confess, shut up all their lives in a convent; for my part, who only live in an old chateau, a little sin goes a great way with me."

"What if I were to see him myself?" said the lady Magdelaine, addressing Imogen. "He is evidently insidious, and consequently dangerous, if he is, as I suspect, a spy:—Yes, I will see him; and let him, if he can, elude the eye of Argus' penetration; yes, I will at least hear what he has to say."—"Say, my lady!" cried Beatrice; "hear what he has to sing. Do, good my lady, get him to sing 'the Merry Knight and the Maid in the Vestment of Blue.' Holy rosary, I thought I should have split my sides with laughing!"—"Beatrice," said the lady Magdelaine, mildly, "sacrifice, I pr'ythee, to the goddess Muta: and thou, Ambrose, conduct this minstrel to my presence."

Ambrose retired with a bow of triumph: the domestic⁹ exchanged looks of pleasurable amazement, and expectation flushed its beams in the bright eyes of Imogen. "Theodore," cried the lady Magdelaine, bring in fresh tapers. Imogen, give me my veil. Beatrice, Blanche, and Agnes, retire to the back-ground." Then, having arranged her fardingale, settled the folds of her ruff, and adjusted her veil after the manner of Paulina, the emperor Nero's mistress, she waited in an attitude of solemn dignity to receive her eleemosynary guest. In a few minutes he appeared, led in by Ambrose. He bowed low, but not servilely; and, resting the end of his harp on his right foot, stood in an attitude rather dignified than humble.

His stature rose to that commanding height which fancy attaches to the idea of majesty, and possessed that graceful slightness and flexibility which characterize youth in its first dawn of manhood: the contours of his face were conformable to the most perfect line of Roman beauty; and the grand, the noble expression of his countenance, evinced a soul where "no dark deed wandered in secret;" it flashed the vivid emanations of genius, blended with the glowing affections of the man and

the ardent spirit of the hero.* His garb was that usually worn in those days by the professors of minstrelsy; a robe of dark-green, gathered at the neck with a small gorget beneath the snowy folds of his ruff, and incircled round the waist with a crimson cadis girdle; the sleeves, slashed off from the elbow, fell to the ground, and discovered those of his doublet of black velvet, fastened at his wrists with silver clasps; a scarlet ribbon fell from his neck, from which was suspended his harp, scarcely larger than a lyre; from his girdle hung a chain, to which was fastened a splendid escutcheon; and his curling glossy black hair defined the form of a head which was that of a youthful Alcibiades.

The lady Magdelaine started, gazed, and remained for more than a minute lost in silent admiration of the form that presented itself at the door of her study. Then, suddenly breaking into an abrupt exclamation, and resuming her air of awful deportment, she said: "Speak, young stranger, whose garb and seeming tell thee of that order fast falling to decay; whence and what art thou, who darest thus boldly to intrude at this unseasonable hour upon the peaceful security of our castle, and insidiously to practise on the simple ignorance of our domestics?"

"Lady," said the stranger, with a bow low and graceful, "I meant not to intrude, but to solicit; not to practise on ignorance, but to interest humanity."

"Who and what art thou?" repeated the lady Magdelaine.—"By birth, lady, a Provençal, by profession a minstrel, by necessity a wanderer, and by sentiment a citizen of the world. The genius of my country found me, while yet a boy, tuning my rustic reed on the delicious banks of the Durance; and taught me to raise my humble lay, and emulate the bards of my native province, who diffused the light of poetry and song o'er the wide dominions of France, then involved in Gothic darkness. I obeyed. Thrice have I carried off the golden

* See the curious account of the appearance of a minstrel, who was introduced at Kenelworth castle, among many other devices and *shows* represented before queen Elizabeth, at an entertainment given her by lord Leicester.

violet* at Thoulouse from my competitors; thrice have I crossed the Rhone, and sung through the wide domains of France the superiority of my native province, its ever verdant meads, its purple vineyards, its fertilizing streams, and snowy flocks. I have raised a nobler strain, and sung the prowess of the warrior, the immortality of the hero: and erewhile, O dangerous theme! I have stolen inspiration from the eye of beauty, and sung the charms of woman, and the omnipotent power of love. This night, the wandering spirit of my profession conducted me to the forest de Montmorell, my better destiny to the portals of the castle, and (oh! suffer me to hope it) my guardian angel into the presence of its fair and noble lady."

The minstrel again bowed, as he finished his recital; and the lady Magdelaine, with a contortion of the muscles that softened her harsh countenance into some faint indication of a smile, replied:

"Young stranger, I doubt not the veracity of thy relation, although I do not pretend to possess the gift of that goddess who could discover the most plausible falsehood by a look. Neither am I ignorant of the reverence in which thy sacred profession was held by the ancients: the king Alcinous is described by Homer as paying the highest honors to his inspired visitor; Ulysses, that wary chief, treated with profound respect the tuneful Dimodocus; the Athenians sent a minstrel to command the Spartans, who conquered under his inspiring influence; Anacreon was caressed at the court of Polycrates, the tyrant of Samos; and so great was the reverence paid by the ancient Arabs to their bards, that their entrance into the cities was hailed with public rejoicings, and the best poet was rewarded with a rich robe, a fine horse, and a beautiful damsel."

"Oh, that I were an Arabian bard!" exclaimed the

* In 1323 the society of Troubadours at Thoulouse sent circular letters to the Languedocian poets, to come and read *their* works, with the promise of a *golden violet* to him who should compose the best romance. Clemence d'Isaure left a sum by her will to be laid out in three golden violets, which the academy of Thoulouse was to dispose of as the reward of superior genius.

minstrel with *naïveté*, and glancing his eye to the back of lady Magdelaine's chair, where hovered the airy form of Imogen; then, after a moment's indulgence, fixed his eyes on the earth, and sighed.

The lady Magdelaine, who had arrested the impassioned glance half way ere it had reached its point of destination, construed its expression according to the surmise of her vanity rather than her pride, and after a moment's silence added:

"But though I were not to acknowledge the claim thy inspired profession should always have on all true lovers of the muses, yet the law of hospitality (never violated in the chateau de Montmorell) would secure thee an asylum for a night such as this (which might have served Virgil as a model for his celebrated Storm); else should I have read Eustatius to very little purpose, who treats so diffusely on the duties of hospitality. I consign thee therefore, young stranger, to the care of my *maitre-d'hotel*, and to-morrow thou shalt receive an audience of leave." The minstrel pressed his right hand to his heart; and with a bow of profound and grateful acknowledgment, was retiring, followed by the domestics; the door was fast closing; when, in a tone of hesitation, the lady Magdelaine exclaimed: "Yet stay, young stranger; I"—She paused: the minstrel respectfully returned. "I would know thy name," said the lady Magdelaine.—The minstrel hesitated, rivetted his eyes on the head of his harp, and, after a moment's silence, eagerly replied, "I am called Orlando, lady."

"Bearest thou no other name?"

"None, lady. A deserted foundling, my infant years were supported by the pastor of the village of Beauvoisin; and my latter life was devoted to the monks of the Petits Augustins, whose flocks I tended on the banks of the Durance."

"By the arms suspended from thy girdle, thou hast filled some higher station than that of tending the flocks of a convent."

"True, lady; I was for some time chief minstrel to the baron de Montargis, whose chateau is bathed with the blue waves of the Durance."

"Then thou servedst a heretic, and a rebel to a just cause."

"'Tis true, lady; he denied the infallibility of the pope, the omnipotence of the saints, and the justice of the claims of the Leaguers. 'Tis some time since I left him in search of a better service."

"Which may fortune bless thee withal!" said the lady Magdelaine; "thou may'st now retire."

The minstrel obeyed.

"And will you not, sweet my lady," said Beatrice, who with Agnes still loitered behind, "will not you hear him play one little madrigal? Marry, he knows all the ballads of Rollo: not to mention the tragic adventures of the baron de Coucy and the fair lady de Vitry, and roundelays, sequidills, and musettes, without end: else is he a youth of no faith; for all these did he promise me in very truth; besides the pleasant and curious tragedy, full of rare device, of the amorous shoemaker, who put himself to death with his own cutting-knife, all for love of a beautiful damsel of high degree. Do, sweet my lady, permit the minstrel to return; the night is yet young."—"Beatrice," said the lady Magdelaine, in a tone of hesitation, "thou dost not consider it would be unseemly for thy lady to hold further converse with this young stranger. Times are now greatly changed since Charlotte of Savoy kissed the sleeping poet Alain Chartier, and was thought not the worse for it. It is not the man (said she) whom I kiss, but the lip from whence flowed so many charming strains."—"But then, dear my lady, kissing a man, and listening to his song; marry, there is a huge difference!" "Not to the eye of unimpassioned philosophy, Beatrice; for though I were to honour this young bard with a chaste salute, or lend an ear to his inspired strains, it would still be but the homage of genius to its kindred spirit."

"Then shall I call him back, lady?"

"No, Beatrice, not to-night: the tasteful propensities of the poetess must not be indulged at the expence of the dignity of the lady de Montmorell."

"Then, with your ladyship's good liking, I'll just step down and finish a courante I had begun with Bernardine

when Theodore interrupted us. No one but a native of dear Provence can dance or play a courante after the right fashion. Marry, I could have thrown my arms around the neck of this same minstrel when he told me he was from Provence, had it not been for pure shame!"

"Why, thou hast as little modesty as Lais or Corinna," exclaimed the lady Magdelaine angrily; "and were all my women of thy bold deportment, this poor youth might have shared the fate of Orpheus, who was torn to pieces by the Bacchantes."

"But, under your ladyship's good favour, if there be no difference between a salute and a song,"——

"Peace!" said the lady Magdelaine sternly; "retire instantly to your apartment, nor violate by unseemly comportment the vestal propriety of thy lady's household."

Beatrice reluctantly obeyed, followed by Agnes, who, with less temerity to express her wishes than the archly simple Beatrice, had not less propensity for courantes, madrigals, and roundelays.

Imogen in pensive silence still remained leaning on the back of the lady Magdelaine's chair, lost in profound reverie; her arm supporting her fair head, the minstrel's voice still murmuring on her ear, the minstrel's glance still beaming on her eye, while the sigh which trembled on her lip expired unconscious ere she was aware of its birth.

"Imogen!" said the lady Magdelaine mildly. Imogen started, suddenly resumed her seat, and, catching up her pen, demanded if she should go on with the bishop of Citeaux and the siege of Beziers?

"No," said the lady Magdelaine, "it is late: I am not disposed for composition; the muses are not always propitious to the midnight vigils of their votaries. I will read till I sooth my mind to rest, and thou may'st retire to thy apartment."

"What book shall I leave you, madam? Here are the Sufferings of the Holy Martyr St. Lawrence, who was broiled on a gridiron."

"No, child, my feelings are not equal to that."

"Here is the Martyrdom of St. Francis who carried his head a considerable distance after he had suffered decapitation."

"Nay, marry, that is still worse."

"Here are the Confessions of St. Augustine, and the Trials and Temptations of St. Theodora."

"Poor St. Theodora! Her's were trials indeed! What a holy struggle between her and St. Dydimus, when condemned before the prefect of Alexandria! And what is that that lies at the foot of the picture of St. Mary of Egypt?"

"'Tis an odd volume of Ovid."

"Well, leave me that, and my rubric, for vespers." Imogen placed the books on the table; and, wishing her lady patroness a good night, retired to her solitary apartment.

The clock in the great hall had tolled out the first half-hour after midnight; the domestics had retired to rest; and Ambrose, the ancient maitre-d'hotel, who loved an old story and old wine as well as any other maitre-d'hotel in the province of Champagne, was still entertaining the minstrel in the buttery with a flask of real muscadell, and an anecdote of the family de Montmorell, rather minute than interesting; when the minstrel, after a long pause, abruptly demanded, "I pr'ythee, good my friend, what fair vision was that which hovered near the chair of thy lady?"—"What, my lady's pet owl?" said Ambrose; "nay, marry, fill thy glass, and thou shalt hear the whole history of it. It was the very same year that our late king Henry the Third, of blessed memory, was elected king of Poland, which I take it was about the eve of"——

"Nay, thou mistakest; I would know who was the lovely maid that"——

"Ha! ha! by the mass, thou hast a hawk's eye, mon sieur troubadour! What, the demoiselle with the cock'd-up nose, scarlet fardingale, slop sleeves, and short petticoats; with a certain roundish look, and a laughing eye? It was the demoiselle Beatrice; and were my old dame Jacintha gone to heaven, and the damsel would cast but an eye of favour on your humble servant"——
"Heavens!" exclaimed the minstrel impatiently, "you

still mistake me: the creature I mean is delicate even to fragility; and there is a nymph-like simplicity in her form, an airy elegance in her figure, that might give a model to the Genius of Sculpture on which to rest his immortality. The very spirit of youth sheds its most touching graces round her; and the look of playful gaiety that animates her countenance is softened by that air of ineffable modesty, which, like a transparent veil, heightens those beauties it would conceal. Her dress is such as Fashion in her happiest caprice might adopt to render loveliness more lovely; and though her robe of grey, her veil and rosary, speak her a novice of some holy order, yet Love, lurking in the dimple her arch smile creates, seems to reclaim the sweet apostate as his own!"

"Pardie, well done, sir minstrel! Mass, an I would not as soon hear thee as my lady herself, when she talks about the gods and goddesses, and nobody understands a word she says save the father director and mademoiselle Imogen."

"Imogen! is that her name?"

"In good sooth is it. So, nothing will serve your dainty taste but our young nun?"

"A nun!"

"That is to be."

"And from choice, sayest thou?"

"Nay, by the rosary, I doubt if her vocation lies much that way. Poór soul! somehow she does not take kindly to vigils and fastings; for which she and the father director have some disputes, and in which she always gets the upper hand, and that with so laughing a face that you would think she was in very sport. For when once she gets loose from my lady's study, she is as blithe as May; and then for charity, I'll set her up against all the ladies of St. Dominick, with my lady and the father director to boot."

"And are her means equal to her virtuous propensities?"

"Marry, no; and more's the pity! She has not a sous but as she earns it by her embroidery: which I sell for her at the next market-town, when I go for provisions;

and then away with the money to the poor serfs who live on the skirts of the forest, and have been ruined by the civil wars; and, yet many a late hour does she sit up to do this, after writing all day for my lady. 'My good Ambrose,' will she say (with such a sweet begging face!), 'shall I coax thee for a taper to-night, and in good sooth I will not speedily trouble thee again?' The saints bless her for a sweet one! It were the pity of pities to make a nun of her."

"Is she related to thy lady?" demanded the minstrel.

"No, truly, poor soul! I wot, she never had a relation: it is thought she was a present from St. Dominick to the ladies of our convent."

"He must have been a saint of very little taste, or very great generosity, to part with such an object."

"Marry, I warrant, hadst thou been St. Dominick, thou wouldst have been less generous. Ah! thou art a wag in grain, sir minstrel. Yet the saint did not part with her altogether; for when she was found by the portress at the wheel, though a coarse veil was what the saint had covered her withal, yet round her little neck was hung an agate cross, bearing the letters *St. D.*; which proved to the ladies of St. Dominick, as plain as their own great spire, that the saint meant to keep her all to himself. She had just entered her noviciate, when my lady begged her of the sisterhood to write for her; for the demoiselle Imogen is a rare clerk, and my lady is writing a History of how the saints used to kill and burn the folk in former times, for the good of their souls, and to save them the expense of buying indulgences. Hark! there goes old Tell-truth: pardie, another quarter and we shall be on the second cock-crow; come, monsieur minstrel, I pledge you in our last glass of muscadel." Ambrose then arose, and conducted the stranger to the apartment allotted him.

CHAP. II.

Mangled peace !

Dear nurse of arts, plenty, and joyful births !
 Alas ! she has from France too long been chased ;
 And all her husbandry doth lie in heaps,
 Corrupting in its own fertility."

SHAKESPEARE.

For thirty years Catherine de Medicis governed France, under the nominal sovereignty of her three sons, Francis II., Charles IX., and Henry III.

" *Il faut diviser pour regner*" was the darling maxim by which the wily Catherine directed her political life : and the increasing influence of the Hugonots, in the reign of her son Charles, animated her to the most refined practice of her favourite theory ; and afforded to the artful and ambitious queen-mother a pretext for fomenting those dissensions, and perpetuating those feuds, by which she hoped to undermine or subdue a faction which daily became more formidable and more dangerous.

Astrologers had foretold, that her sons would die without issue, and that the diadem of France would encircle the brow of a prince of the line of Bourbon. Even the strong mind of Catherine was not proof against these impositions, which the dark credulity of the age received with implicit confidence, and sanctioned with the profoundest reverence. It was therefore little to be wondered at, that the young Henry of Bourbon, king of Navarre (of the blood royal of France, and the idol chief of the Hugonots), became at once the object of her detestation and her dread : yet, by one of those profound strokes of policy which distinguished her reign, she offered him in marriage her lovely and accomplished daughter, Margaret de Valois ; and by this extraordinary proposal dissipated the Hugonot reserve, and gave an animated flow to the genial current of open-hearted confidence.

Although Henry embraced the proffered alliance, love had no share in this acceptance ; his heart submitted to the tyranny of prudence, and his inclinations became a sacrifice to the wishes of his party, which was flattered in

the hope that this union would disseminate peace to France, and give to eternal oblivion the religious and political factions of her children. The Hugonots, in the ardour of their hearts, dazzled by the splendid promises of Catherine and her son, crowded to the capital, where magnificent preparations were already made for the nuptials of the king of Navarre: and, bewildered by the pleasures, and intoxicated by the alluring enjoyments, of the most voluptuous court in Europe, the unsuspecting victims of the cruel policy of the queen slumbered over the dangers by which they were secretly surrounded: and, revelling in the fair illusions of the present, cherished no suspicion of the brooding evils of the future.

On the 18th of August, 1572, all Paris resounded to the lively acclamations of joy, happiness, and festivity; for it was the wedding day of the king of Navarre and the princess de Valois. On the 24th of August, 1572, all France re-echoed the groans of the slaughtered Hugonots, for it was the *massacre of St. Bartholomew*! History has enrolled in her annals the sanguinary transactions of this day with dreadful exactitude; but the eye, the heart, will eagerly pass over a recital of those horrid deeds, which even in perusal blanch the glowing cheek of warm humanity, and surpass in reality the fancied atrocities which the most depraved and sanguinary imaginations could devise.

Catherine, who possessed herself neither the religion of prejudice nor of truth, rendered the fanaticism of the times subservient to her policy; and instigated her jealous and deluded adherents to a massacre which was executed under all the aggravating circumstances that religious fury, private pique, or public animosity, could devise. The young king of Navarre found a comparative safety in flight; Charles and his mother triumphed in their execrable machinations; and France, for twenty-six successive years, groaned under the complicated woes which the transactions of one day engendered.

Charles survived the massacre of St. Bartholomew but two years; and his brother Henry III. became the successor to that "barren sceptre" with which Catherine amused

the puerile minds of her sons, while she still retained the reins of government in her own hand.

It was at this period that a dangerous confederation arose in France, known by the name of the League. Its leaders were of the house of Guise; its pretence, the defence of the church; and its secret motive, the subversion of the state. But that profound system of dissimulation which formed the soul of Italian politics, and which Catherine had imbibed with the principles of her idol Machiavel, served her in the most critical period of her life; and induced her to declare for the League, which she dreaded, and to unite herself to the Guises, whom she abhorred. Opposed, therefore, to the associated powers of the court and the league, stood the young king of Navarre: the hero of a little army of heroes; and, as he himself pleasantly expressed it, "a king without a kingdom*, a husband without a wife, and a warrior without supplies." Such was the situation of this magnanimous prince, whose character scarcely "smelt of mortality;" who, having conquered himself, was worthy of conquering others†; who possessed the ambition to encounter the greatest difficulties, with abilities to vanquish them; who united the talents of the statesman to the spirit of the hero; and who equally in the cabinet or the field betrayed a genius that bore all before it.

After the massacre of St. Bartholomew, he joined the few faithful adherents the cruel policy of his enemies had left him; but in the qualities of these superior few, was found an equivalent for the limitation of their number. The baron de Rosni, better known as the duke de Sully, whose life presents so beautiful a picture of prudence, wisdom, and loyalty; the marshal de Biron, so justly celebrated for his military talents and love of letters; the

* Spain had usurped the kingdom of Navarre from his father; and he continued to hold his miniature court at Bearn, the place of his nativity. Vide *Perifex, Histoire de Henri le Grand*.

† Henry said of himself, "Nature has formed me passionate; but since I have been sensible of this fault, I have always endeavoured to vanquish so dangerous a propensity."

Mémoires du Président du Thau.

brave Crillon, whose valour bestowed on him the epithet *La Nouë*, to whose generous virtues even his enemies paid the homage of esteem; with many others scarcely less deserving of notice, though less fortunate in obtaining it, composed a little flying camp, of which Henry was himself the soul. Alternately the vanquished and the victor; consenting to interviews with the queen-mother, productive of no decisive effect; now openly meeting her forces in the field; and now signing truces, no sooner formed than violated; this gallant prince still continued to support the vicissitudes of his destiny with firmness and heroism.

Meanwhile the powers of the League, and the influence of the Leaguers, increased with hourly extent: it was believed by the royal party, that the designs of the ambitious duke de Guise were to dethrone the king*, and already was the duke's destruction determined on by Henry and his mother.

That popularity which the insinuating virtues and dazzling talents of de Guise had obtained, the amazing power he was endowed with, and the circumstances of the times, rendered a public process equally dangerous and difficult. Assassination was more consonant to the political prudence and cherished vengeance of Catherine; and the duke de Guise was murdered in the royal apartments (whither his unsuspecting confidence had led him) by the king's guards.

His death produced universal commotion. All Paris was animated by ungovernable fury. The duke de Mayenne, brother to the murdered de Guise, was declared his successor as chief of the League; and Catherine survived the victim of her barbarous policy but a short time.

The king of France, naturally imbecile, whose conversation was that of a capuchin, and whose life was that of a professed debauchee, vainly endeavoured to win the duke de Mayenne to his interest by the most splendid offers; and shrinking beneath those fatal circumstances which endangered his life and crown, he

* Henry III.

sought alliance with the king of Navarre, as a *dernier resort*. That careless and unguarded confidence, which formed so prominent a trait in the noble character of the gallant Henry, and which experienced treacheries had not chilled, led him to accede to the proposal; and the two kings met near Tours, embraced with fraternal tenderness, and vowed mutual enmity to the League.

This transaction was shortly after followed by the death of the king of France, who was assassinated by a young fanatic monk of the order of St. Dominick: and Henry de Bourbon (who united in his person the three races of the French kings), as lawful heir to the dominions of France, ascended its throne, and assumed the title of Henry IV., King of France and Navarre; and thus fulfilled the prediction of the astrological sybil, whose prophetic declarations had first rendered him the object of that hatred and persecution with which Catherine de Medicis pursued him through the most precious years of his existence.

France could not desire a master more worthy of governing her; more capable or more anxious to repair the losses she had sustained, and to restore her to that peace and unity, happiness and prosperity, which her own anarchical and vague commotions had forfeited. Yet still the greater part of her volatile children, blinded by party prejudices, or influenced by religious fanaticism, opposed his accession to the throne of his ancestors; and considered, or at least pleaded, his religion as an insurmountable barrier to his elevation: and as the Leaguers possessed an army four times more numerous than that which surrounded the royal standard, the horrors of civil war still continued to spread devastation through some of the finest provinces in the kingdom.

Still opposed, and still unsubdued; tempering the most dauntless valour with moderation, the most heroic courage with humanity; the royal Henry appeared a being of more than mortal power, of more than human virtue: living in the midst of his troops; sharing their toils while he rewarded their efforts; animating them by the inspiring gaiety of his air, while he provided for their safety; and flattering them by cheerful presages of suc-

gess, which his example taught them to deserve, and his genius seemed almost created to command. The celebrated battles of Argues, Yvri, and Aumale, have enrolled the name of the hero high on the records of immortality; and, after having performed deeds of almost supernatural heroism before the walls of Rouenne, he was necessitated to raise the siege, and marched from thence to the investment of Neufchatel. It was in the interval between this period and the siege of Epernai, that the young minstrel of Provence appeared before the portals of the chateau de Montmorell.

CHAP. III.

When ye dispel the train
That waits on beauty, then religion blows
Her trumpet, and invites another circle:
Which, full as false as the preceding crew,
Flatter her problematic mental charms,
While snuffing incense; and, devoutly wanton,
The pagan goddess grows a christian saint,
And keeps her habit of divinity.

WALPOLE.

How far beyond
The praise of mortals, may the eternal growth
Of nature to perfection half divine
Expand the blooming soul!

AKENSIDE.

"THE age is barbarous," said the lady Magdelaine, as she returned one morning from the gay and splendid court of Catherine de Medicis, "and the courtiers are all Goths and Vandals."

The lady Magdelaine was then at that critical period of female existence, when the ebb and flow of youth and beauty are under the influence of a retrograde motion: She had attained her thirty-second year, and was unmarried: she had gone to court that day, habited in eastern splendour, and was neglected; which accounted for the barbarism of the age, and the vandalism of the courtiers.

Nature had been a mere step-mother to the lady Magdelaine. She was considered as a moveable basso-relievo to the animated beauties of Catherine's court; yet unhappily the lady Magdelaine had an exhaustless passion for notoriety, in a situation in which the enchantment of loveliness, or the attraction of the Graces, alone could secure it to woman. Time continued to increase the vivacity of his assaults till the last cowardly charm of youth retreated, and obliged the lady Magdelaine to change her plan of operation. "I will reform the age," said lady Magdelaine, "reform it altogether;" and accordingly she patronized Baif, corresponded with Montaigne, took Jane of Bourbon, wife of Charles IX., as her model, and determined on making a new translation of Pliny, in opposition to the learned duchess of Burgundy; but pedantry without genius, and learning without taste, only rendered her the *but* of fashionable derision to all Paris.

"The world," said the lady Magdelaine, "is not only buried in the profound ignorance of the middle ages, but immersed in the atheistical darkness of antiquity!" and accordingly the lady Magdelaine, by 'a transmutation rare,' descended from her philosophic stilts, to perform the bare-footed pilgrimage of humble christianity.

But religion was not just then the fashion at Paris; and the lady Magdelaine, under the persuasive influence of her father director, a brother of the Cistercian order, retired to her chateau in Champagne (of which the death of her only brother had put her in possession), to work out her salvation, to found a monastery, and compose the History of the Crusades; a work equally compatible with her talents as an authoress, and her sentiments as a devotee.

To father Anselm was consigned the superintendence of that holy pile which was to immortalize her piety, as her work, she believed, would her erudition; while every nerve of the father was stimulated to exertion, by the hope of becoming the head of that structure he reared. Along each half-finished aisle, and on every rising cloister, Interest hung the tempting lure of an abbot's cowl. Never did a building proceed more rapidly; it seemed a

work of magic: for father Anselm 'had views on this side heaven,' which gave the wing of expedition to every effort.

Not so the learned labours of the lady Magdelaine: they seemed to increase in an inverse ratio with the exertions she made to complete them; they were indeed of Egean magnitude. A total want of connection, a strong instinctive propensity to anachronism, a multiplicity of crude details, and a crowd of too obvious plagiarisms, reduced the bewildered brain of lady Magdelaine to the *ne plus ultra* of authorship: but then the whole fault lay in the want of an amanuensis!

"I think, father," said she to the director, "you could find me out some young brother of your own order, who could at once officiate as almoner and secretary; who could write a fair hand, and knew enough of Latin to transcribe with accuracy from the fathers."

"A young brother of my order!" reiterated the astonished father. The request struck on the very nerve where a thousand little selfish interests lay in embryo. "Why cannot I offer myself?" thought the priest: but then, independent of his superintendence of the monastery, he was watching the fall of a cloisteral priorship in a neighbouring convent; he had been lately installed in the dignities of the confessional of the ladies of St. Dominick; and held not only the spiritualities, but the temporalities, of the lady Magdelaine in sacred trust. "My labours are indeed great," said the father. "So are your profits," whispered Interest. "No," said the father; "no competitorship for me, even with a brother of my own order! Yet, if she must have an amanuensis, why she shall: but marry, I bar the young Cistercian; no, it shall be the little Imogen of St. Dominick."

When St. Dominick had procured the sanction of pope Honorius III. to found a convent for nuns, he had, with benevolent gallantry, inserted a clause in the rules, that the sisters were to receive and educate such young daughters of misery, as the guardian spirit of innocence in distress should lure to their sacred portals. Among the little victims of misfortune, thus received and admitted into the lay sisterhood, was one who had been taken

at the wheel when an infant. They called her Imogen, for such was the name carved on the little cross suspended from her neck; and dedicated her to saint Dominick, for on the reverse of the cross were marked the initials *St. D.*; on her left cheek was a mark.

The lady abbess had heard that St. Theresa had just such another. The nuns looked wise, and saw a mystery in this coincidence, all but the minor canoness: she was perpetually tearing to pieces the sybil leaves of the holy enigma; but the nuns knew it was not the faith of the canoness that obtained her elevation.

The little Imogen, while yet a child, distinguished herself by a piety surpassing belief. Her canonization was already, in prospect, added to the convent's holy records; and the lady abbess was cried up as a prophetess. An old friar (predecessor in the confessional to father Anselm) had taught her to write: he did more; he taught her as much Latin as enabled her to read some of the fathers, who had not written merely to shew their philological talents, or their knowledge of the recondite branches of language.

At thirteen, she had not only read the works of the angelic doctor St. Gregory the Naziantine, but could repeat the various arguments advanced in those long disputes which existed between the Capuchins and the Dominicans, on the reality of the wounds of St. Francis, and the orthodox cut of a monastic cowl. "It is a second saint Theresa," said the nuns; and the blush of gratified ambition crimsoned the cheek of the meek-eyed novice. The saint Theresa was the standard of attainment which youthful emulation had erected in her bosom; and she affected to imitate the life, as she resembled the person and manner, of her idol saint.

The fragile delicacy of her form, the native enthusiasm of her disposition, her propensity to study, and the nature of those studies, all assisted to render her a fanatic, and disposed her to receive the inspirations of fancy as existing forms, and the bright illusions of a glowing imagination as real substance. Already the little saint had her ecstasies, her raptures, and her visions. Yet was her mind strong and comprehensive; but, deprived

of all subjects of discussion or inquiry, save what the dull repetition of convent bigotry afforded, she had not the power of rectifying the aberrations of reason by the observations of experience, or the benefit of a liberal intercourse.

The nuns of saint Dominick were divided with respect to this prodigy: the younger sisters hated her for her superiority; the elder cherished her as a saint in embryo. Sister Pasiphaë, the minor canoness, stood alone; she neither hated nor cherished; she admired her talents, derided her fanaticism, and pitied her delusion.

"Art thou determined on being a saint?" said she one morning, returning from matins with the young novice.

"Not if I can be more than saint!" said the novice with fire.

"Thou art ambitious," said the nun, "and ambition is not the virtue of a saint."

"Then *it is* a virtue?" said the novice eagerly.

"What wouldest thou wish to be, wert thou in the world?" said the minor canoness, evading her question.

"In the world!" quickly repeated the novice, her whole face suffused with crimson; "In the world I would not be any thing I have ever heard of; I would be more: but," she added with a sigh, "I shall never leave this convent, and here I can only be an abbess and a saint."

The minor canoness had long been in a consumption. She complained of weakness, and for the first time passed her arm through that of the young novice: the novice bent her fair head, and pressed her lips to the hand that rested on hers, in acknowledgment for the condescension.

"Go to," said the canoness, "thou art dangerous; I would not love thee if I could, for thou art" (she shuddered as she spoke) "a fanatic."

"I would be a saint," said the novice with simplicity.

"Thou hadst better be a christian," said the canoness

"Teach me, then, to become one," said the novice with a glance of irresistible insinuation. From that mo-

ment the minor canoness and the novice of St. Dominick were inseparable.

Such was the person fixed on by the father director as the amanuensis of lady Magdelaine.

"The abbess is deceived in this child," said he. "She is pious, all-believing, and understands a little Latin, but she is no genius; for never did a confessional echo to such a ridiculous list of peccadilloes, as those she avowed yesterday: the simplicity of her questions would puzzle a conclave to answer. She has entered her noviciate, 'tis true; but that can be put off for a time."

The lady Magdelaine consented reluctantly to exchange the young brother of the Cistercian order, for the young novice of St. Dominick; and the abbess, well aware of the advantage of placing a member of her society about the person of one of the richest devotees in France, readily consented to the putting off her *profession* till the lady Magdelaine should have finished her Crusades.

The novice learnt her intended translation from the convent to the chateau, with an obvious transport, rather inimical to the demure sobriety of her vocation. On her knees she received a little silver reliquary from the abbess, enclosing a few grains of the sacred brick-dust scraped from the wall of the Santa Casa of Lorette; and promised to come every Sunday to perform her devotions at the convent. "I give thee this precious relic," said the abbess, "as a holy spell against the temptations of a wicked world." The novice kissed it devoutly, and sprung on her feet with a playful levity not altogether appropriate to the pious exordium addressed to her. Yet as she seated herself in lady Magdelaine's litter, and waved the end of her veil to the nuns who stood in crowds at the chancel window, she wiped away one tear with her girdle, and received another on her lip, half closing in a soft Adieu! but it was from an eye as sparkling as Euphrosyne ever betrayed in her archest moments; it was on a lip as smiling as fancy ever gave to the cherub mouth of Hebe.

Imogen cast one glance at the gloomy and sequestered pile she had left; then flung another into the gay per-

spective that burst on her view: she bounded from her seat; her cheek flushed, her heart throbbed, every nerve was in a state of rapturous irritation. The world was new to her, and she was but sixteen.

Imogen was really so ignorant of Latin, or her change of situation had so much increased the native vivacity of her disposition, that, far from assisting the lady Magdelaine, she confused and entangled every thing. She made false transcripts, and worse translations; the fathers were made to utter nonsense, and the saints to speak with the levity of mortals. The lady Magdelaine was enraged: the director trembled for the return of the young Cistercian; and undertook not only to instruct the young amanuensis in the duties of her situation, but to assist her in her classic studies.

Imogen's thirst for instruction was insatiate. She received with avidity the lessons of her holy preceptor; and in a few months had not only conquered all the difficulties of the Latin tongue, but, mistress of its idiomatic delicacies, was able to detect the inelegancies of the fathers; and did it with a freedom that, in the eyes of the pious, bordered on profanation.

The literary pursuits of the lady Magdelaine were *literally* lucubrations; for she rose late, and spent her mornings in her oratory, chapel, or tapestry-room. The greater part of the day was consequently at Imogen's disposal, and she passed it in the library of the chateau. The late lord de Montmorell was a man of letters: he lived and died in the midst of his books, and left to his learned sister the best private library in France. The studies of the young novice had hitherto been confined to the Golden Legend, the Lives of the Martyrs, and the works of St. Gregory the Naziantine; but now a new world broke upon a mind replete with native intelligence, endowed with that insatiate desire of information which marks the nobler faculties of the soul, and enriched with that versatility of talent which is the distinguishing characteristic of genius.

From this mental regeneration, she cast a retrospective glance on the nature of her past studies, and felt like the being who, born unblessed with the precious sense of

sight, in the first period of awakened vision flings his rapt eye on the glories of the creation, wonders, and adores!

Poor St. Gregory was the first who felt the effect of this intellectual revolution; he departed, with his pious phalanx, before the victorious arms of the two Plinys: a few verses of the elegant Tibullus were equal to the defeat of the sixty-two decades of saint Ely the Angelic: Plutarch's heroes overthrew the Golden Legend; and one book of Virgil completed the conquest of the whole army of martyrs! She had once thought there was nothing to be learnt out of her convent; and she now thought there was nothing to be learnt in it that would not disgrace the credulity of childhood: the influence of knowledge, operating on genius, gave wing to thought; and reflection, bursting from the thralldom of prejudice and error, pointed its soaring flight towards the bosom of truth. Those mystical refinements which disfigure the purity and beauty of true religion; those logical subtleties which set common forms at defiance; those improbable legends, the wild offspring of disordered imagination or pious fraud, now appeared to her as they were, equally foreign to religion or morality, and frequently subversive of both. "If I am to be a saint," said Imogen, "I will be the foundress of my own sect. I will not seek for my religion in books, and modify it into systems, for I feel its essence in my soul; nor shall it be to me as the avenging angel of dreadful retribution, but the spirit of peace, of love, of bliss eternal!"

It was for this sentiment imprudently uttered, that the father Anselm threatened her with all the artillery of the church; and decreed as a penance, to say daily, for a week, the seven penitential Psalms, the Angelus Domini ten times, the Litany of the Saints six, and the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin twenty-four. Yet was the little apostate pious, even to the definition of St. Paul: for she "laughed with those that laughed, and wept with those that wept;" nor was her heart alive to an emotion that had not borrowed its predominant feelings from the joy or sorrow of another.

Two years residence at the chateau had rendered her habitually necessary to the lady Magdelaine, but had not produced that intimate connection which sympathy alone engenders. Alike involved in literary pursuits, and sequestered from the world, the strong opposition of their characters evinced, that similar circumstances, when operating on dissimilar minds, will produce effects equally opposite.

The freedom which began to display itself in the opinions and conversation of her amanuensis, and the scepticism of her arguments even with the father director, frequently elicited the reproof, and roused the orthodoxical fears, of the lady Magdelaine: whilst Imogen, acting more under the influence of proud and conscious superiority than of prudence, frequently brought the arguments of her patroness and the friar to the test of her liberal acumen, and detected their alloy with an air so triumphantly playful, that she was always sure to lose by the victory; and when additional severity pursued that triumph, used sportively to exclaim, with the celebrated king of Epirus, "Another such victory, and I am lost."

The growing apostacy of the young novice soon became a subject of discussion at the convent of St. Dominick, owing to the complaints of lady Magdelaine. The nuns trembled for their *album sanctorum*. Sister Agnes requested she might be recalled, ere the spirit of Luther had wholly possessed her; sister Mary said an Ave Maria extraordinary; and the minor canoness sung out a heathen *Io triumphe!* The Abbess, however, with a stronger view to the church militant here on earth, than the distant prospect of adding a saint to the convent list, treated the surmises of lady Magdelaine as the too sensitive apprehensions of extraordinary piety, and only recommended to her not to spare wholesome severities and admonition, and urged the father director to wave his penitential crook over the sceptic head of the youthful apostate.

The abbess's advice was not lost, yet apostacy seemed to feed on the antidote administered for its destruction:

No stormy tower, nor walls of beaten brass,
Nor airless dungeon, nor strong links of iron,
Can be retentive to the *strength of spirit*.

SHAKESPEARE.

Meantime the germ of proud ambition, cherished into being by the old nuns of St. Dominick in the heart of their young novice, stole into maturity with daily and insensible increase; and if no longer emulative of a place in the *album sanctorum* of canonized spirits, the strong propensity to supereminence still throbbed with, vague but ardent palpitation at her heart. Attracted rather by the splendid than the awful virtues, she embraced the brilliant theories of her imagination for the solid documents of reason; and enamoured by the beautiful ideal, the level path of cold "flat reality" was neglected or contemned. Careless and unguarded, her conduct frequently evinced the little connection existing between genius and common sense: sanguine and impatient, the extreme vivacity of her disposition was only restrained by a softness more than feminine, and a meek gentleness that sprung from a sensibility trembling alive to the remotest apprehension of offence. Her glowing and susceptible heart was prodigal in its feelings, ere reason could exert its influence to discriminate the justice of those claims which had roused its profound emotions into being; and, alive to those exquisite and delicious sensations which bestow rapturous moments rather than permanent felicity, she readily granted her accedence to the dangerous maxim,

Qu'un moment de vrai plaisir
Vaut un siècle d'existence.

LE MOUSTIER.

The *naïveté*, the atticism of her manners, evinced them to be solely influenced by the predominant feeling of the moment, unmodified by the varying precept of fashion; unformed by the grotesque model of doting custom, they were natural, original, and pregnant with that indescribable something, which, analogous to the *non sa che* of her person, awakened an interest rather felt than understood. Yet was not she perfectly beautiful: it was the thousand glowing sensibilities of her soul that gave her face its sweetest charm, as colours mount-

ing on the tulip's brilliant surface enrich it by the variety of their dyes. Her form, round and symmetrical, though below the ordinary stature, was perpetually animated by those graceful gestures which ever characterized her thoughts, even when silently conceived or imperfectly expressed; and there was a certain something, an inexpressible fascination, in her air and manner, which, like the philosopher's fanciful definition of the soul, "was all in all, and all in every part." It was scarcely necessary that nature should have endowed her with woman's dangerous attribute, eloquence, to have rendered her the most persuasive speaker in the world. Her voice, rich, varying, and mellifluous, was the organ of her soul; and, vibrating in unison to all its feelings, sometimes stole its murmur of caressing fondness on the heart, whose woes it soothed; or, in the gayer moments of sportive animation, thrilled on the senses with syren influence, in pity or in joy, still giving to her words and sentiments a superadded existence.

The mystery which hung over the birth of the young novice, had so many parallels among the foundling members of the convent, as to excite neither amazement nor curiosity in any breast but her own. There, however, it lived a subject of perpetual interest and reflection: that tender heart, which, in the narrow sphere of her existence, throbbed in vain to meet with a kindred associate, delighted to lose itself in those fanciful speculations which restored her in idea to the endearments of parental love and the blessings of social affection. "What," she would exclaim to some unsympathising sister, 'in a paroxysm of romantic hope, "what if at this moment my father, my mother, lived! if I had not been torn from their arms in my infancy, or a happy chance now led them to the asylum that received me! Oh! I should know them among a thousand; I *feel* I should; and then I would throw myself on their bosoms, and die the blessed death of joy in their embrace!" The nuns sometimes smiled at her enthusiasm, but more frequently inveighed against the weakness of all human affections, and exhorted her to subdue their effects by prayer and mortification.

During a severe winter, a robin had flown for shelter to her cell. The heart of Imogen throbbed with a violence equal to its own when she felt it fluttering in her bosom. It soon learnt to feed from her fostering hand; and, when their alliance grew more intimate, it would sometimes receive its nourishment from her lip. All day it hovered round her, and at night it reposed on her bosom; it seemed to have stolen the art of endearment from its tender mistress, and almost returned her carresses with the same ardour with which they were lavished. At last it died beneath the ruthless fangs of a cat of the order of St. Dominick! Imogen was inconsolable. The abbess sternly reproved her for her sinful weakness.

"One *must* love something," said the weeping novice.

"Where is the necessity?" said the abbess coldly.

"*Here!*" said the novice, pressing her right hand to her heart, and raising her soul-illuminated eyes to heaven, with an expression that seemed to say, "And from thee, O my heavenly Father, have I received it!"

CHAP. IV.

Or su—e tempo

Che tu t'en vada e troppo lungamenti,

Hai dimóra ancora—

Partité.

GUARINI.

Like blooming Eve

In nature's young simplicity, and blushing

With wonder at creation's opening glow.

WALPOLE.

THE lady Magdelaine had not returned from matins five minutes, when the minstrel (the morning after his arrival) was summoned to receive his audience of leave. Ambrose conducted him to the entrance of the great gallery. The lady Magdelaine was standing at a distant window, in earnest conversation with her confessor. They both turned round, and fixed their eyes on the stranger. The friar's glance was keen, penetrating, and inquisitive: it seemed to anticipate verbal inquiry, and to threaten cer-

tain disapprobation; for he saw in the minstrel the young brother of the Cistercian order, or perhaps something still more dangerous.

The minstrel soon found he was drawn thither to gratify the friar's curiosity, rather than to obtain the necessary leave of departure, which the attempered looks of the lady seemed to deny; for the friar's questions were numerous, perplexing, and shrewd; the minstrel's answers were simple, ingenuous, and plausible. He repeated, at lady Magdelaine's request, his little story with undeviating accuracy.

"It is too simple not to be true," said the lady Magdelaine softly. "And too inconsequent to need a comment," said the friar pointedly. Then turning round, he seemed in a *sotto voce* to expostulate rather than converse with her. At that moment Imogen appeared, crossing the gallery in a direct line to the spot where they stood. Her step was light and devious, her upcast eye beamed with the light of genius, and the glow which flushed her cheek seemed to ebb and flow to the impulses of her agitated fancy. Her veil had fallen on her shoulder, and discovered the fine contour of her head and neck. It was the head of a Sappho, deficient only in that voluptuous languor which should characterize the countenance of the enamoured Lesbian. It was perhaps rather the head of St. Cecilia under the influence of a musical rapture. A pencil, which she held in one hand, was suspended over the tablet which the other contained; and she appeared in the act of luring back to her memory some happy but truant thought which the "thick-coming fancies" of poetical inspiration had hurried half-realized into oblivion.

Nature had not wholly abandoned her weaknesses in the breast of the friar; and the point in debate between him and the lady Magdelaine seemed little favourable to those "leavings of mortality." It was with difficulty he had restrained the overflowing of his gall, when the novice of St. Dominick appeared to receive its bitter ebullition on her innocent head.

"Why, how now, daughter?" said the friar, sternly. Imogen started: the spell was dissolved; the spirit of ge-

nus fled; and, hastily consigning her tablet to her girdle, she drew her veil forward, and paid the salutations of the morning.

The lady Magdelaine leaned in a musing attitude against the frame of the casement, and was silent. The minstrel stood concealed behind a projecting pillar. Imogen, the emblem of health and cheerfulness, advanced towards the friar. "I had hoped, daughter," said the father director, "yes, *hoped*, that sickness had prevented your assistance at matins to-day; for I hold not in competition the temporary sufferings of the perishable body with the soul's eternal torture: but that flushing cheek, elastic gait, this smile scarce repressed, this levity scarce concealed, speak, fatally speak, the body's health robust, the soul's deadly sickness!"

"Father, I knew not that health was a crime," said Imogen with simplicity.

"To devote ourselves to the vague and sinful wishes which redundant health inspires; to pursue their gratification, to the neglect of our religious duties; that is criminal, daughter: but, Holy Mother! in you, who are destined to become the spouse of God,"—Imogen, shuddering, seemed to recoil from an honour she deemed profanation.

"Why wast thou not at matins?" sternly demanded the father.

"Dear father, the saints are witness it was my intention; nay, already had I reached the chapel, when I met"—

"Whom?" said the friar, in triumphant expectation.

"Whom?" asked the lady Magdelaine, casting a glance towards the pillar.

"Who," repeated the friar eagerly, "seduces thee from thy devotions, and steals between thy soul and heaven?"

"In very truth then, good father, it was—a butterfly," said Imogen gravely.

"Pshaw!" said the friar, in a tone of peevish mortification.

"Nay, father," she sportively added, "let me entreat thy attention and belief. Is it not in holy writ we find,

that he who despiseth little things, himself shall perish little by little?"

"This trifler leads us from matter of more moment," said the friar, turning to lady Magdelaine abruptly.

"You treat her errors with too much lenity," said the lady Magdelaine evasively.

"I prithee, father," continued Imogen, laying the tip of her rosy finger on his arm, in the same tone of playfulness, "is not the Greek term for the soul and for a butterfly the same? and did not you tell me the soul was fancifully supposed by the Greeks to exhale itself from the lips of the departed in the form of that lovely insect? Oh! it was a beautiful idea; and how often has the similitude struck me, when I have felt the spirit of my bosom, restless, fluttering, agitated, still soaring beyond its destined point of elevation, still reposing its joys on the bosom of future bliss! Oh, but this butterfly! It fled the cloister's gloom. Poor insect! how natural! Unwittingly I pursued its devious flight. Its rich wings of purple and gold expanded to every gale, glittered to every sun-beam. It revelled in such variety of bliss, so free, so wild, so uncontrolled, that I sighed, and wished to be a butterfly; and, in good sooth, forgot my matins."

"Cease these ravings of thy distempered fancy," impatiently interrupted the father, "hitherto tolerated in a child, but grossly impious in the maturing mind of one who approaches the hour of holy initiation into the sacred mysteries of the church."

"Indeed, father! and does that honour exclude me from adoring the Deity in his works?"

"Adore him, daughter, in thy cell, in holy seclusion in his consecrated temples, in monastic privacy: he asks no more."

"Then may the spontaneous offerings of my heart, though unasked, be not unaccepted? This morning, father, when my steps deviated from the chapel to that glowing valley where all nature hymned the praises of its God, (thinkest thou my orisons were less fervent because less systematic?) Oh, father! when I inhaled new being with the morning's fragrant breath; when that glorious orb rose on my rapt gaze, and every dewy blossom expanded

its bosom to the genial influence of its beams, and shed fresh perfume on the air; when every bird sung its song of rapture, and every trembling leaf seemed endued with a tongue to breathe its praise to the Most High; thinkest thou, amidst this soul-inspiring scene, *my* full heart was silent? that on *me* alone the light of heaven beamed in vain? Father, the tear of rapturous gratitude is not yet dry upon my cheek: *that* tear was my morning sacrifice to heaven."

"Father," said the lady Magdelaine, "your patience amazes me. This is tantamount to the dangerous opinions of Spinoza: Manchees himself never breathed stronger materialism: the Gnostics are more christian in their ideas."

"Dearest madam," said Imogen softly, "sure I have breathed no heterodox opinion, no heretical tenet: yet," she added playfully, "were I to become a heretic, in good sooth I believe it should be of the Gnostic order, such as you described them, father, in your sermon on the eve of St. Agnes, there is so much variety in their *seven heavens!*"

"*Corruptio optimi pessima!*" ejaculated the father to the lady Magdelaine, turning up his eyes. "But I commend her, daughter, to thy prayers and exhortations. Let us trust it is the weakness of her brain, rather than the viciousness of her heart, that deludes her." Then muttering a few low words to the lady Magdelaine, he added aloud: "Thou knowest, lady, sacred duty calls me to attend the consistorial meeting of St. Menhoulm. There shall I some few days sojourn: in the mean time, to the saint's holy care and guidance I consign thee."

The lady Magdelaine bowed, to receive the benediction which followed.

"And thou, young stranger," added the friar, walking towards the minstrel, "who hast received so liberally the rites of hospitality, depart in peace; here thou mayest not longer tarry: it is the will of the lady de Montmorell. Go, and St. Dominick be thy speed!"

The minstrel, advancing a few steps, pressed his hands to his breast, bowed grateful acknowledgment to the lady Magdelaine, and profound obedience to the friar; who,

waving his hand with a patriarchal air, pronounced a *Dominus vobiscum!* and retired.

It was now for the first time Imogen perceived the proximity of the minstrel: it was now for the first time she raised her timid looks, and met his eye. It was an eye that spoke its intimate connection with the soul, and the glance it emanated left upon the imagination something that dared the power of language to define; it sunk at once to the heart of Imogen, and became there a new sensation.

Unaccustomed to the presence of a stranger, the habitual bashfulness of a young recluse veiled the vivacity of temperament, the aberrations of genius, and the playfulness of youth. Blushing, confused, and overwhelmed, Imogen drew down her veil, and played with the rosary that hung at her girdle.

With an air doubtful and hesitating, with a look of vexatious disappointment, the lady Magdelaine still remained leaning against the window-frame, silent and undecided: when, casting a glance to the court below, she observed the father ascending his litter for St. Menhoulm; and as his eye met her's, a faint benediction reached her ear. Her wavering resolutions steadied to the tone of his voice. She turned round to the minstrel; who, half retreating, half loitering, seemed as undecided as herself.

"Young stranger," said she, in a tone of affected softness, "pursue thy way: may the muses be propitious to thy efforts! may Apollo smile upon thy votive lay! may the saints protect thee in thy devious wanderings!"

With this half heathenish, half christian invocation, the lady Magdelaine slowly retired; nor, in the absence of her mind, perceived that she had left Imogen behind her.

The tall spectral figure of lady Magdelaine had disappeared more than a minute, ere Imogen herself observed her situation. She started, and glided swiftly after the lady, slightly but courteously bowing her head as she passed the minstrel. The minstrel bowed reverentially.

Had the image of his tutelar saint passed him in solemn procession, Devotion could not have stamped her traits

of pious reverence and profound homage more impressively on his countenance.

Already had Imogen reached the head of the great stairs, which descended to the hall below, when the minstrel's voice arrested her attention, and she heard his footsteps echoing to her own.

"Stay, lady," said he, in a voice of supplicating earnestness; "one moment stay!"

Imogen turned round in surprize, in confusion. The minstrel drew back, fastened his eyes on the earth, and remained silent; but his silence was eloquence itself. A request seemed to hover on his lip, but the finger of Modesty checked its utterance: he raised his eyes, and Imogen read it there.

"What wouldst thou, stranger?" softly demanded the novice, her own timidity vanishing before the more obvious confusion of the minstrel. The minstrel sighed, pressed his hand to his heart, yet was silent.

"Wouldst thou that I exert my little influence with the lady Magdelaine in thy favour," said she, construing the character of his brow into the most probable sense.

"Thou art all benevolent," said the minstrel, eagerly seizing on the construction she had given his wishes, "and hast anticipated my petition."

"Speak then; how can I serve thee?" modestly returned Imogen, with eyes fastened on the earth, and a faint smile of encouragement playing round her lip.

"By procuring me leave from the lady Magdelaine to remain a few days longer beneath her hospitable roof."

"Alas, that thy request should exceed my ability to obtain it! The lady Magdelaine is peremptory in her resolves: and though in this respect they were not to militate against thy wishes, still would she not oppose those of her director, and they, I fear, are not in thy favour?"

"Indeed!" exclaimed the minstrel.

"Indeed," said Imogen: "he wills not that strangers find an asylum in the chateau; and in the unhappy situation of the times, claims that sanction for his scruples which humanity would withhold."

"Alas! then thou refusest me?"

"Indeed I scarcely dare hazard a request so hopeless

of success ; yet change that request, and put my wish to serve thee to the test. The lady Magdelaine is rich, a lover of the arts,"—Imogen paused, and blushed : the pride, the delicacy, of a young mind, with respect to pecuniary matters, withheld the offer she was about to make in the name of lady Magdelaine.

"This harp is not the badge of beggary, lady," said the minstrel proudly ; "that which alone I would stoop to beg for, you have refused."

"In good sooth," said Imogen, blushing still deeper, yet with a smile which she meant should heal the wound she had inflicted, "thou wouldst too soon repent thou hadst preferred thy singular petition, or that I had obtained its request : for, trust me, thy professionally roving disposition, thy gay and charming avocation, would ill accord with the sullen gloom, the sequestered tranquillity, of this profound solitude."

"Lady," said the minstrel, with energy, "the nightingale, when first he soars beyond the parent's fostering wing, roves unrestrained, and flings with careless prodigality his witching strain o'er all the scenes of varying nature ; till, lured by instinct to the rose's bloom, he fastens on a neighbouring spray, nor seeks to pour his strain beyond his idol flower's balmy sphere*."

"I perceive not thy allusion," said Imogen, casting down her eyes, and changing colour.

"But I feel it," said the minstrel, with impassioned energy.

A faint blush, like a transient sun-beam, suffused the face of Imogen, and with a faint farewell she was retiring, when the minstrel, laying aside his harp, sprung after her, caught the flowing drapery of her robe, and exclaimed :

"Yet, oh fair being ! one moment stay, one little moment !"

"What would'st thou then ?" said Imogen, trembling and confused.

"Thy forgiveness."

* In allusion to the beautiful Persian fable of the nightingale being enamoured of the rose.

"But how forgive, when no offence was offered?"

"Thou sayest true; no offence has been offered; for heaven itself does not reject the homage of the heart, however inadequately expressed."

"Hark! 'tis the lady Magdelaine's bell. Fare thee well. I will remember thee in my orisons."

"Wilt thou? wilt thou indeed? then, henceforth be Imogen my tutelar saint," said the minstrel, dropping on one knee, "and the sublime and holy sentiments her lips so lately breathed, my orthodoxy."

"Farewell! farewell!" said Imogen, with increased confusion, "longer I dare not tarry."

"But if thou daredst!" said the minstrel, in a tone of soft but sly insinuation.

"Nay," said Imogen, with a smile, "wouldst thou turn inquisitor to thy saint to prove her fallibility?" Then loosing her robe from his grasp, she gracefully waved her hand, and with the airy step of the hamadryad vanished from his view.

The minstrel remained for a considerable time in the recumbent attitude in which the novice had left him. It was the sight of her tablet, which had fallen from her girdle, that acted like a spell on his senses, and restored him to himself. He hastily snatched it up, and turning over its leaves read the following

ODE TO A BUTTERFLY.

Child of a sun-beam, airy minion,
Whither points thy flutt'ring pinion?
Pinion dipt in rainbow hues,
Pinion gemm'd with sparkling dews,
Shed from many a weeping flower,
Bathed in Matin's rosy shower;
Tell me why thy form so bland
Still eludes my eager hand;
Tell me, wanton, wouldst thou be
Madly wild and wildly free?
If freedom is thy life's best treasure,
Then get thee hence, gay child of pleasure,
From feudal tow'r, and cloist'ral cell,
For freedom there did never dwell;
And I no more thy form will woo,
But pleas'd thy varied flight pursue:

And now upon a zephyr's sigh,
 Thou seem'st in languid trance to die ;
 Now fluttering wild thy golden winglet,
 Sports in many a wanton ringlet ;
*'Mid the fragrant, spicy gales**
 Which the rose-lip'd morn exhales,
 Thou soar'st to drink the sun's first gleam,
 Or bask thee in each infant beam :
 Then panting in thy heaven-snatch'd glow,
 I feel thee fluttering round my brow,
 Whence thy breezy plumage chases
 Each tear the hand of sorrow traces ;
 Or as athwart my lip you fly,
 Fan away the woe-born sigh :
 Tear of sorrow—sigh of woe,
 Early taught by fate to flow,
 From a heart, a stranger still
 To nature's dearest, sweetest thrill :
 Tear of sorrow, sigh of woe,
 Ne'er given thee, happy thing, to know ;
 Thee, whose life, a raptur'd minute,
 Bears an age of blisses in it :
 e Thee, whose life, a minute's measure,
 Dawns, exists, and fades in pleasure.
 Oh, insect of the painted wing !
 I've watch'd thee from the morning's spring ;
 As idly lapt in soft repose,
 Midst the blushes of a rose,
 The playful zephyr's balmy breath,
 Has wak'd thee from thy transient death ;
 Or the bee, in tuneful numbers,
 Put to flight thy fragrant slumbers :
 And as thy wings of varied hue
 (Dipt in rose-embosom'd dew),
 You flutt'ring imp, and deftly try,
 Still I follow, still you fly ;
 Ever wav'ring, ever changing,
 Never fix'd, and always ranging :
 Midst the lavish charms of nature,
 Thou her freest, gayest creature ;

* The residence of Miss Owenson in Ireland, while this work was in the London press, precluding the possibility of her correcting the proof-sheets, has occasioned many errors in the English copy very difficult to correct : in many places words necessary to the sense are entirely omitted, and in others the meaning of passages entirely changed. From this cause, or the carelessness of the printer, a whole line in this beautiful ode has been omitted, which the editor has endeavoured to supply by introducing the line printed in italics.

Now the tulip's changeful die ;
 Now the violet's balmy sigh ;
 Now the rose's orient glow ;
 Now the lily's tintless snow ;
 Woo and win thy brief caress,
 Alternate pall, alternate bless !
 Till the summer's glow is o'er,
 Till her beauties bloom no more :
 Then the flower whose fragrant sigh
 Survives her warmly blushing die,
 Lures thee to a heaven of rest,
 On her pale but odorous breast ;
 And amidst her balmy treasures,
 Thou diest in sweet excess of pleasures !
 Oh happy, careless thing, could I
 But live like thee, but like thee die !
 Like thee resign my fleeting breath,
 My life of bliss in blissful death ;
 I'd envy not th' extended span,
 The patriarchal day of man :
 For him let *Time's* protracting pow'rs
 Still spare existence, drooping flow'rs,
 And wreaths of joyless years entwine,
 But oh, *one raptur'd hour* be mine !

The minstrel was a poet of *Nature's* own making, and his judgment was drawn from the same source as his inspiration ; he was therefore no stranger to the justest, purest rules of criticism ; but what had the rules of criticism to do with the rhapsodic effusion of impulsive fancy, or awakened feeling ? Or how was the judgment to exercise its powers on the poem, while the heart, in the utmost vehemence of emotion, hung enraptured on the charms of the poetess ? There was, besides, in the fragment, a consonance of sentiment with that the minstrel himself cherished, that awakened his sympathy, and secured his admiration. " Delightful enthusiast !" he exclaimed, " fanciful, but bewitching being, how extatic to share with thee thy '*raptur'd hour* !' to participate in thy fairy visions, to live beneath the warm beam of thine eye, and hang upon the melting murmur of thy voice, to spurn the cold dull forms of a world for which thou wert never created, and to range with thee through all the yet un conjectured bounds of feeling, sentiment, and passion !"

CHAP. V.

Credi a me—

Non e pene maggiore

Che in vecchie membra il pizzecor d'amore.

Pastor Fido, Atto prima.

IMÓGEN, *en reveuse*, wandered from the gallery to the great hall, from the great hall to the corridor, and from thence to the lady Magdelaine's study. Fancy and recollection were busy with the heart, and the mind was turned adrift under the influence of its own unconscious *égaremens*. She found (yet scarce perceived) the lady Magdelaine seated at her writing-table, her eyes fixed on vacancy, her right hand supporting her head, the fingers of her left playing with the leaves of a superb missal which lay open before her. She took no notice of Imogen's entrance; who, with an air equally abstracted, seated herself at her little desk, and, as if touched by the magic wand of sympathy, fell into the same reflective attitude.

It is one of the properties of fire, under the influence of experimental philosophy, to blaze with greatest ardour, at the moment it possesses the least power to consume: it was thus with the heart of the lady Magdelaine; it flamed when most incapable of communicating the faintest glow to the most inflammable object, and languished beneath the '*besoin de l'âme tendre*,' without the power of exciting it in another in the remotest degree: philosophy was no proof against the eloquence of brilliant eyes; and the enthusiasm of devotion did but transmute its object without abating its ardour.

The lady Magdelaine went from the gallery to her study, whither the minstrel's form pursued her. She fixed her eyes on the picture of saint Peter, and bowed her head; but his saintship disappeared, and the lady Magdelaine saw nothing but the symmetrical form of a young man leaning on his harp. She opened her missal, but her eye was incapable of receiving on its *retina* any object but one; and the missal's holy leaves, like the picture of St. Peter, presented nothing to her view but the

minstrel. A thousand times she likened herself to Dido, and the minstrel to Eneas, whom the god of storms had thrown on her protection: nor could all the self-interested sophistry of the father Anselm reconcile her to the step she had taken, in banishing him from the asylum he had sought. Imogen had been some time seated opposite to her, before the silence mutually preserved was broken by her ladyship.

"Mathias Corvinus, king of Hungary, kept three hundred secretaries," said the lady Magdelaine. "Poor souls!" said Imogen, with a sigh of fellow-feeling, and dipping her pen in the ink, preparatory to her taking down what she supposed the learned minutes of the lady Magdelaine for a future chapter of the Crusades.

"The father Anselm," continued lady Magdelaine, "thinks *one* more than enough for me." Imogen answered with a sigh, heavier than she had already heaved.—"Longinus was private secretary to the famous queen Zenobia; and yet I have read he was young and handsome when she first received him into her service," muttered the Lady.

"That could have been no objection," said the novice innocently.

"The father Anselm thinks otherwise," said the lady Magdelaine. "Holy Mother! why has he not the liberality of St. Jerome? who expressly tells us, 'fear God and do what you will.'"

"Egenhart was secretary to Charles the Great," continued the lady Magdelaine, musing, "when Imma, the emperor's daughter, became enamoured of him. Poets and musicians are certainly dangerous inmates, and in a domestic capacity not to be guarded against; witness the attachment of the empress Julia to Ovid;"—

"Was he her secretary?" asked Imogen simply.

"The queen of Navarre's penchant for the poet Amayot, her amanuensis; and lastly the unfortunate passion of Mary queen of Scots, for Rizzio, who was only a poor Italian minstrel."

"And was he young, and handsome, and graceful?" eagerly demanded Imogen.

"He was ugly and deformed," replied the lady Magdelaine.

"That men should be so different!" sighed Imogen.

"What a Herculean labour have I undertaken?" said the lady Magdelaine, looking round at the books, papers, and manuscripts, that lay scattered in disorder on every side. "Surely mine is the destiny of the Danaides; what a treasure would a young man be to me, who could arrange, connect, and transcribe with fidelity; who would be modest, unassuming, and respectful. For instance, if father Anselm had not the same objection to my employing this young stranger as an amanuensis, as he had to my retaining him in his musical capacity,"—

"Which I dare say he has not," exclaimed Imogen with vivacity.

"And that this young Orlando could write a good hand;"—

"Which I could swear he does, madam," said Imogen eagerly.

"But what avails it now," said the lady Magdelaine, sighing, "since he has departed?"

"Not ten minutes back I saw him in the gallery," said Imogen, blushing; "and Theodore waits in the antichamber, if you have commands for him."

"Well then," said the lady Magdelaine, in a tone of hesitation, "you may, if you please, tell the page to command the stranger's attendance; not that I positively mean to—"

Before she had finished the doubtful sentence, Imogen had delivered her message to Theodore.

In a few minutes the page returned leading in the minstrel: Imogen hung her head over her desk, and seemed deeply engaged with her pen; the lady Magdelaine assumed an unusual air of dignity and reserve, as if to hide the weakness of her heart beneath the severity of her manners and countenance. The minstrel, with a look of mingled suspense, impatience, and hope, stood in respectful silence, to know the nature of those commands which had again brought him to her presence.

After an awful pause, the lady Magdelaine exclaimed: "Ere I inform thee, young stranger, of the motives which

have induced me to recall you, it is necessary you should know, that I have long since devoted my life to the service of the church, and the republic of letters. Thou wilt start at a determination so extraordinary in a female, for the days of piety and learning are no more; we must no longer hope to see a shelf, like that in the library of Euclid, filled with the works of learned ladies; we must no longer hope to hear of a philosophess like Dama the daughter of Pythagoras, or Theano of Crete; such a historian as Anna de Commynes, or such a poetess as Sappho of Lesbia, or Corinna of Thebes: and female sanctity is, I am afraid, a treasure still rarer than female genius, to be found in this Gothic age; a perfect union of both is, perhaps, in any age, a *rara avis in terra*!"

The lady Magdelaine paused, and raised her eyes to observe the effect her learned speech and modest inuendo had produced on the minstrel; but unhappily, at that moment, the minstrel was observing the effect produced by a sunbeam, as it fell like a glory round the seraph head of Imogen, and touched her form with something more than human. The lady Magdelaine bit her lips, hemm'd away her mortification, and desired Imogen to retire till she was sent for.

Imogen, who blushed equally for the pedantic folly and childish vanity of her patroness, and blushed a still deeper dye at the slyly observed gaze of the minstrel, was glad to be dismissed, though her little heart throbbed with impatient curiosity to learn the result of that conversation from which she was excluded. She arose and retired from the study, with that downcast look of unaffected modesty, which ever gave to her air and countenance the chaste attractions of vestal purity.

While lady Magdelaine remained in a tête-à-tête conference with the young stranger, Imogen flew to the garden: the brilliant beams of the meridian sun, the tempered freshness of the noontide air, the melody of the birds, the balmy fragrance of every fleeting zephyr, were all in unison with the tone of her spirits, and spoke a language her heart understood. Plunged in that luxurious flow of thought, which a new and pleasing object awakens in a mind long steeped in the sluggish inanity which so-

litude uninterrupted and a perpetual sameness of objects and ideas impress, a thousand new-born pleasures fluttered at her bosom; every nerve was in that state of refined susceptibility, which thrills to the faintest touch; every pulse throbbed to the animating influence of some sweet and novel emotion. "Why am I so happy?" asked Imogen, with a light bound, while the fragile blossom scarcely bent its head beneath the airy pressure of her foot; then, with a sudden transition of thought, though not wholly unconnected with the self-interrogation, she began to reckon over all the men she had ever seen.

It required no great extent of arithmetical powers to complete the calculation: "Two friars of the order of saint Francis," said Imogen, counting on her fingers, "four of saint Dominick, and two lay brothers of the Cordeliers, all old, ugly, and bigoted; the bishop of Champagne in his last visitation to our convent: what an unwieldy, bloated form, and what a rigid air! our three successive confessors at the convent; the first squinted most hideously, the second was turned of seventy, and the third!"—all the inquisitorial horrors of father Anselm's countenance stared her in the face: "an interesting young monk, in the last stage of a consumption," continued the novice, torturing her memory, "who came to our abbess for a small piece of the rod with which saint Dominick used to flagellate himself, as a charm against his disorder: the Clincaillen*, who sells us reliquaries, crucifixes, and sweetmeats, at the convent gates; four old knights of mount Saint Michael, occasional visitors to lady Magdelaine, with war and famine lurking in every lineament of their harsh faces; and two knights of St. John of Jerusalem, the one with a wooden leg, the other wanting an eye: these are all I can recollect, except the ferocious-looking serfs of the forest, the old domestics of the chateau, young Theodore the page, and this young minstrel."

Imogen blushed to her eyes as she concluded her calculation.

"Perfection itself," said Imogen, with the air of a little

* Clincaillen, a travelling pedlar.

logician, "is only estimated as such by comparison; the form and manners of this stranger may not positively possess all that excellence I ascribe to them; but, by comparing him with all the men I have ever seen, his superiority is so eminent, that I could almost believe him a creature of another sphere, a being of some superior mould, and formed of finer clay. Good heavens! (colouring again, but not quite so deeply) how the minor canoness would laugh at this fanciful idea, and call it the wild flight of her romantic little saint! What is this minstrel to me? only one must think of something," said Imogen, tearing a flower, she had just gathered, to pieces, and entering the door of the great hall, when she meant to have turned towards the terrace.

"Here is rare news," said Beatrice, running against her: "holy rosary! who would ever have thought to see any thing young and handsome in the chateau again?"

"Thou art in good spirits, Beatrice," said Imogen smiling.

"*Certes, mademoiselle*, and with good reason; I thought we should never have danced a courante again: but I must hie me to the tapestry-room, to tell them the news."

"What news, I prithee?" demanded Imogen, catching the flying Beatrice by the gown.

"Why, *mademoiselle*, do you not know my lady has hired the minstrel? I just stepped into my lady's study to know whether I was to give Mr. Jephtha a black eye, and how the poor dear young demoiselle's robe was to be shaded, whom they are going to sacrifice; when who should I find there but our old *maitre d'hotel* and the young minstrel! 'I have added this youth,' said my lady to Ambrose, 'to my household establishment; and he is to have an apartment to himself, and a table to himself, for I have conferred on him the honour of being my private secretary.'—But, blessed Agnes! the dinner-bell rings, and not a stitch done yet!"

Beatrice flew up the great stairs leading to the tapestry room, and Imogen turned into the dining-hall. The lady Magdelaine was already seated at table; the novice started to find the day so much older than she suspected,

and seated herself in silence opposite to her patroness. Had Pythagoras presided at the feast, a more unbroken taciturnity could not have been preserved, or the law of temperance been more strictly attended to.

Although pleasingly involved in the novel variety of her own emotions, the attention of Imogen was insensibly attracted to the alteration visible in the air, manner, and dress, of her associate.

The lady Magdelaine, who had hitherto considered a total disregard and neglect of the proprieties of dress as the most irrefragable proof of internal acquirements and literary pursuits, and often quoted the purposely inked nails of the emperor Julian, as authority for her contempt of all the *bienséance* of the toilet; now appeared to Imogen for the first time to have sacrificed to the Graces: but the Graces, as if to shew their pique for the former heresy of their new convert, were most unpropitious to her offering.

A coif, or ruff, never worn since the celebrated tournament given at the coronation of Francis II., and a fardingale of cut velvet, made after the fashion of one of the beautiful Diana of Poitiers, produced no other effect than to render ugliness and deformity more apparent.

Imogen had recourse to the bouquet in her bosom to conceal the ever ready smile, that hovered on her lips; while Ambrose, Bernardine, and Jaques, as they attended at table, cast many a glance, pregnant with reverence and admiration, at the immense gold *etui* which hung at their lady's side, sufficiently ponderous to throw her off her centre, had she not given equilibrium to the balance in a fan of proportionable magnitude, which now hung from her girdle, and on state days was the rod of office that denoted the official capacity of her page.

Silent, musing, and reflective, as she played with her spoon and plate, Imogen imagined she was busy with the bishop of Citeaux and saint Bonaventure; for Imogen was ignorant of the complicated anatomy of the human heart, and was only a logician when the cause or effect interested her mind, or awakened her apprehension.

Ambrose, however, somewhat more penetrating, observed to Bernardine, as he replaced the silver cup and

massy salver in the buttery, "that although his lady was silent, he knew she was in a *diable de bon humeur*, for he observed her smile more than once; not to mention," said the maitre-d'hotel, "her calling me *monsieur Ambrose*, and ordering me to treat this new secretary with a flask of light muscadel: *mort de ma vie!* I have more than half a mind to ask her good leave to ride the Spanish jennet, as far as Saint Menhoulm, for my new doublet and hose."

CHAP. VI.

If music be the food of love, play on.

SHAKSPEARE.

O sì una vola
Volta il provassi;
Se sapessi una volta
Qua'li e grazia e ventura
L'essere amato il possidere amando,
Un reamante Core;
So ben io che direste,
Dolce vita amorosa,
Perche sì tardi nel mio Cor vonesti.

GUARINI.

THE lady Magdelaine retired from the dining-hall to her oratory, as was her usual custom; and Imogen, having tumbled over a hundred books in the library without reading a line in one, sauntered to the tapestry-room. She found the demoiselles Beatrice, Blanche, and Agnes, busy with the sacrifice of Jephtha's daughter.

"Pardie!" said Beatrice, continuing a conversation which the entrance of Imogen had for a moment interrupted, "here is mademoiselle will end the dispute at once."

"I prithee let me hear it," said Imogen, seating herself at a vacant frame.

"Why, mademoiselle," said Blanche, "'tis all about the colour of the minstrel's eyes. Agnes will have it they are black as her jacket; Beatrice vows they are blue; holy mother! if I know whether he has an eye in his head, why then am I a saint! though certes methought

he looked marvellously like the picture of Beelzebub in the shape of a comely youth, in the legend of St. Maxima; and I warrant you I counted my beads under my fardingale all the time I was in his presence."

"Thou art always counting thy beads somewhere or other," said Beatrice; "but I would lay my watchel-coloured taffety to a copper sous, that for every Ave Maria thou sayest for thy soul, thou repeatest ten for a husband."

"Better pray for a husband for one's self," said Blanche sneeringly, "than take up with the cast-off affections of other folks' husbands."

"Blessed St. Dominick! there's an imputation!" said Beatrice colouring; "but I scorn your words, mademoiselle; and though you are so devout, and such a mass-woman withal, I doubt if you were counting your beads under your fardingale when the young minstrel was squeezed into the oriel window with you this morning, and you were winding the silk off his hands, when all the rest of the family were at matins."

"Did you wind your silk off his hands, Blanche?" said Imogen, snapping her needle in two.

"Pardie! and what of that, mademoiselle?" said Blanche: "the saints are witness I was repeating my litanies, and thinking of no mortal man, when my reel snapped, and the minstrel, who was walking up and down in the hall, had the civility to offer to hold my silk."

"The minstrel," said Beatrice, sarcastically, "knew"—

"What of the minstrel?" interrupted the lady Magdelaine, at that moment entering the apartment: "what of the minstrel? and what licence are you giving your tongues? Beatrice, must I always command you to sacrifice to the goddess Muta, or warn you of the fate of Lara, who, though celebrated for her elocution, lost her voice from speaking too much?"

"Well, lady, I am silent," said Beatrice; "marry, if I speak another word to-day I will give any one leave to cut my tongue out."

"You may finish, however, what you were going to say when I entered the room," said the lady Magdelaine significantly.

Beatrice plied her needle, and continued obstinately silent.

"Who is it was speaking of the minstrel?" said the lady Magdelaine peevishly.

"Dear my lady," said Blanche, "we were only saying, that, with your ladyship's good liking, it would be pure pleasant pastime to have monsieur le troubadour singing and playing for us while we are at our frames, especially as we have wrought hard all day."

"Why, damself," said the lady Magdelaine, with a look of unusual complacency, "I should have no objection to indulge you in a matronalia, which was tantamount to the Saturnalia of the men among the Romans: but I have not engaged this youth in the capacity of a musician, but a secretary. Yet, as this is the festival of St. Theodora, and you have worked hard all day,"—

"Sweet my lady," said Beatrice, forgetting her vow, and oversetting her frame as she leapt up; "sweet my lady, you are all goodness, and I will have the minstrel here in the twinkling of a needle." And before the lady Magdelaine had finally decided on the propriety of suffering her young secretary in his musical character to appear in her presence, Beatrice returned, ushering him in. He had brought his harp, and bowing low as he entered, cast a modest glance towards lady Magdelaine, expressive of his sensibility for the favour conferred on him. That glance steadied the wavering intention of his patroness. "He is timid, modest, and unobtrusive," said she mentally, "and needs encouragement. Then, after a pause," she exclaimed, in her usual tone of dignified solemnity:

"Although I have only engaged thee in the sober station of a secretary, nor with a view to encourage unlicensed merriment among my domestics, yet, as I may sometimes call on the witcheries of thy art, to dispel the cloud which Study hangs on the brow of her votarist, I have summoned thee this evening to give me a specimen of thy tuneful powers. Although no performer myself (though I once touched the lute and recorder), the progress of harmony is not unknown to me. 'Tis to Apollo we owe the invention of the lyre. He owed it to ve, and first tuned its chords to soften the cruelty of

Daphne. Timotheus would have enriched it with a few additional strings, had not the muses forbade the innovation. But it was by the voice, which Zeno calls the flower of beauty, that Apollo won the prize from Marsyas and Pan. Plato has termed poetry without music, a beautiful face which has lost its bloom; Epaminondas was reproached for his musical ignorance; Socrates did not disdain to study its theory, and Pythagoras reduced it to mathematical rule; not to mention those great musicians, Olympus the Phrygian, Aristoxines, and Ptolemy. Alas! we have nothing now to compare to the tethrichord, monochord, cithera, and right and left handed flutes. But whither am I wandering? I forget that Erudition has not led thee through her mazes of scientific lore; that thou art but the pupil of Nature, and ignorant perhaps of the rules of that art thou professest. And yet the inspired Sappho preferred the wild notes of her beautiful but ignorant Phaon to the homage of Alcæus, the most elegant poet and musician of his day."

"And had I been that Phaon," said the minstrel, with *naïveté*, "I should soon have become an Alcæus too; for Sappho would have been at once my inspiration and my theme."

"Indeed!" said the lady Magdelaine, with pleasurable surprize; "but perhaps," she added with a smile of condescension, "thou hast already tuned thy lays to the charms of some fair rural beauty."

The minstrel sighed, drooped his head, and lightly thrilled on the chords of his harp.

"Do, good my lady," said Beatrice impatiently, "let him sing the quaint, pleasant, and marvellous ballad, of the Merry Knight and the Maid in the Vestment of Blue."

"No," said the lady Magdelaine languidly, "I should prefer something in the Lydian measure, or hypo-Phrygian. I once witnessed the soothing powers of the latter. It was a short time before I left the court, and at the marriage of the duke de Joyeuse: Claudin*, the modern Timotheus, by playing in the Phrygian measure, animated one of the courtiers to such phrenzy that he flew to arms in the presence of his sovereign, till the cunning

* Vide *Dictionnaire de Musique*, par Rousseau, article *Musique*.

minstrel stole him back to reason in the soothing strains of the hypo-Phrygian. Let me then have something that soothes the spirits, and moves the soul to tender thoughts."

The minstrel bowed, tuned his harp, and, after a symphony of wonderful execution, struck a few low chords, and accompanied the instrument with his voice. It was a voice of no very extensive compass, but it was a voice that breathed the sweetest intimation to the heart; its great charm lurked in the skill with which it was managed, and the exquisite expression of its tones; every note sighed the spirit of passion, and every word had the energy of a sentiment. His accompaniment was rich, wild, and various; yet the execution of the musician only seconded the ideas of the poet, without overwhelming the sense by the sound. The measure of his verse was original, and his song was *love*: he described the progress of its sensations with the *naïf* simplicity of a novice, who delineated from the consciousness of his newly awakened feelings; but it was in the language of a master, who could adorn his subject with all the seducing graces of poetic imagery and fanciful epithet. His sentiments were such as love impresses in the first æra of its empire, but still they were such sentiments as love only produces when acting on the soul of genius and sensibility.

Rapt, agitated, sublimed, his feelings became the sport of his art; and, lost in the sweet delirium which his own vivid imagination awakened, his fingers trembled on the strings; the harp's soft vibration faded into silence, his voice died away to a sigh, and his eyes, beaming with genius and passion, fastened their eloquent glances on Imogen; who, for attitude, expression, and beauty, might have that moment given a model to Sculpture or Painting for the figure of Attention animated by Rapture.

One hand was folded on her throbbing bosom, the other leaned on her frame, her form bent gently forward, every feature expressive of the rapt enthusiasm that swelled her breast, every glance emanating the visionary raptures that fluctuated in her fancy. The hidden soul of harmony had hitherto lain dormant in the bosom of Imogen; for till now those magic powers that could

alone awaken its sympathies were denied her. Oh! you, who have felt a rapture even to agony from the influence of those strains that breathed the soul of passion, of sentiment, of something even more than either; who have in vain attempted, with languishing curiosity, to define the sweet, the overwhelming, and visionary joys that float on the fancy, and collect them into an object of comprehension; conceive (for you only can conceive) the emotion of the novice, as, hanging on the minstrel's witching lay, she felt herself endued with another sense, and her heart throb with sensations, to whose existence she was till then a stranger!

Imogen still seemed to listen, though the minstrel had ceased to sing, till her delirium fading away, like the dissolving visions of a blissful dream, left her involved in a soft and tender melancholy, scarcely less delicious than the raptures which had preceded it.

Although the lady Magdelaine had neither the taste nor judgment to appreciate justly the exquisite musical talent of her secretary, she had vanity enough to construe the sense of his song as an effusion inspired by the charms of his noble mistress; and though the dignified pride of nobility was insufficient to combat the frail weakness of the woman, yet she disguised the fallibility of her heart beneath the coldness of her deportment.

After a slight commendation, she added: "I thank thee for the entertainment thou hast afforded me; but the hour devoted to erudite labour is arrived, and in a few minutes I shall require thy presence in my study, to instal thee in thy new avocation." The minstrel with lowly reverence retired; and the lady Magdelaine, having given some general orders to her women, shortly after left the apartment, telling Imogen she should not that evening have any occasion for her service.

The lady Magdelaine had scarcely closed the door, when the impatient Beatrice eagerly demanded, "Well, mademoiselle, how like you the minstrel's singing?"

"*Like it!* gracious Heaven! like it!" repeated Imogen, throwing her arms on her frame, and covering her face with her veil.

"Why there!" returned Beatrice, much mortified, "I thought mademoiselle would think nothing of it. The moment he began, I saw he was shame-faced before my lady. Blessed rosary! one verse of the Amorous Shoemaker is worth a thousand such as he sung now."

"For my part," said Agnes, "I would as soon have heard old Ambrose conning over his rubric as such a die-away ditty, not a word of which I understood."

"But his eyes!" added Blanche; "who observed his eyes? and then how the colour came and went in his cheek, and how his hands trembled! Poor modest youth, I swear I felt for him."

Thus in chit-chat commentary passed away the rest of the evening, till the supper-bell summoned them to the hall. Imogen remained alone, silent and thoughtful; her arms still rested on her frame, but she had raised her head, and her eyes were fixed on the last beam of the evening sun, as it faded on the height of a distant mountain. The tapestry room opened on a little covered alley, formed expressly to afford a walk in despite of the weather's inclemency: thither Imogen bent her steps; and, seduced by the balsamic freshness of the air and beauty of the evening, she descended a flight of marble steps that led to the terrace beneath. This terrace, which encircled the chateau, was shaded by luxuriant linden-trees, and surrounded by palisadoes; it commanded a view of the beautiful valley of Nogent, reposing in the shelter of those stupendous mountains whose summits were involved in the mists that rose in sun-tinged columns from their rugged sides. The fantastic finger of eve had thrown her vapoury wreaths on every object, and hung every blossom with a balmy tear. A thousand wayward forms dappled the air, and the still beamy west flushed a rich tint on the softened and indistinct landscape: while the towers of the chateau, and the distant spires of the convent of St. Dominick, were already invested with the gloom of an artificial night, flung from the lengthened shades of the forest of Champagne.

Imogen hung over the palisado, fixed her eyes on the blue waves of the Aisne that glided beneath, and, pursuing their furtive course, extended her gaze to the rich

vale through which they rolled. It was a scene finely in unison with her feelings: the air inspired a delicious languor; she was melancholy, but not unhappy; pensive, but not mournful; and to a thousand vague and varying ideas succeeded a train of reflection, which had for its object the past circumstances of her life, her present situation, and future prospects.

"Alas!" sighed Imogen, "memory, hope, or conviction are alike unfavourable to the wishes of *my* heart! An exemption from every enjoyment the heart loves, the understanding ratifies; an alien in sentiment, in feeling, to those with whom I am doomed for ever to associate; with a soul too much alive to those views even reason condemns, I am wretched, yet scarcely know wherefore; I am unhappy, but dare not complain." At that moment a nightingale took possession of a tree that shaded the spot where she stood, and poured forth a strain "most musical, most melancholy." Silence seemed enamoured of the lay, nor suffered a breeze to sigh its hidden rapture. Imogen listened for a considerable time, silent and delighted; till, involuntarily apostrophising the charming songstress, she exclaimed: "Sweet bird! all nature hangs upon thy thrilling plaint; while the soft but melancholy privilege of even sighing away *my* sorrows is denied me!"

"And canst thou have a *sorrow*, thyself the type of bliss?" said a voice low but distinct.

Imogen started, turned round with a faint exclamation of surprise, and beheld the minstrel. From the impulse of undefinable timidity and confusion, Imogen would instantly have retired; but the minstrel's attitude of graceful supplication, his voice of respectful entreaty, operated with her secret wishes to detain her; yet it was with a modest reluctance that left her determination doubtful.

"If," said he, "I violate by my presence the sanctity of your secret meditations, I will instantly retire; but if thou (who so sweetly canst deplore thy own hidden sorrows) art not insensible to the woes of others, O turn, and suffer me to enjoy the temporary bliss chance has invested me with; for it is a sweet stranger, and my heart welcomes it with all its liveliest transports."

"Art thou too then unhappy?" demanded Imogen with sympathizing earnestness.

"How shall I answer thee?" said the minstrel, "or make thee understand that solecism of the heart, by which I feel this moment as the happiest, yet perhaps the most miserable, of my existence? Hitherto my life's happiness has consisted in fugitive minutes, exquisite, but few: I revelled in their transient felicity, yet still my pleasures multiplied in expectation, and memory extolled their worth beyond the value of their own identity; while actual fruition played lightly o'er each sense, and left the heart's aching void unfilled."

"Alas!" said Imogen with emotion, "I do remember me thou hast said thou wert an orphan from thy infant state, and haply hast never felt a father's warm embrace, nor known a mother's rapturous caress. The tender kindness of endeared relatives may not have lived for thee, nor the sweet recognition of a friend awaked thy bosom's transports: if so, I pity thee!"

Imogen turned aside her head, and wiped away a tear with her veil. A silence for a moment ensued; and the minstrel, gazing on her, with a sigh exclaimed:

"Such is the pity which angels give to suffering man: yet not for such deprivations thy goodness has enumerated let thy pity only flow; for, oh! feels not the heart a void but what collateral claims can occupy? feels not the heart a want but what the tie of consanguinity can obviate? oh, too sure it does! Restless and unquiet, it throbs, it languishes for some soft blessing, some long-imagined bliss, rather desired than understood; and wildly palpitates with fond impatience to lavish its glowing sensibilities, its overflowing raptures, on an object worthy to awaken and receive them. Yet pardon me, lady, if, all-sainted as thou art, I speak to thee in language thy holy ignorance of mortal passions will scarcely comprehend. Reared in the school of sacred self-denial, where Nature's self, awed into submission by stern Religion's voice, resigns her precious influence, and leaves the vestal soul to heaven, thou canst never have known the pang which wrings the heart when it shrinks upon itself in conscious desolation; when the glowing

feelings, gasping with rapturous emotion, suddenly chill and wither in the want of that sympathy which is denied them!"

"Can I not?" exclaimed Imogen emphatically, clasping her hands, and raising her eyes to heaven: "Oh God! how keenly have I felt all you have described. I am not the happy but deluded being you suppose; for oh! less rich in what I possess than poor in my conscious deficiency, I would gladly exchange my feelings for the apathy I condemn in others, the credulity I compassionate."

"I understand thee," said the minstrel with energy and delight; "thy mind has soared beyond the narrow limits of error and prejudice; thy heart, unsophisticated by the doctrines of bigotry and superstition, is still rich in all those precious feelings which are at once the proudest boast of humanity, the sweetest endowments of nature. And art thou, then, thus formed to bless and to be blessed, doomed to wither out thy life amidst a convent's solitary gloom? is thy spring of youth to lose its rosy bloom in fasts and vigils of mistaken piety? and are thy brilliant talents, thy touching graces, thy mind's intelligence, to live and to decay amidst the blighting coldness of ignorant and uncongenial associates?"

Confused, and blushing at the flattery or pleasing truths so artfully conveyed, Imogen replied:

"I am indeed destined to a monastic life; I have scarcely known any other: yet my days, if exempt from rapture, have flowed on in peace, and that life which is virtuous can scarcely fail of being happy."

"O deceive not thyself, sweet saint!" said the minstrel with a soft smile: "superior to thy associates, severed from the world, thine will be such a life of solitude as contradicts the purposes of Heaven, and hurls defiance to the law of Providence. Oh! trust me that Nature, ever enamoured of the happiness which mutual pleasure bestows on her children, chills the solitary fruition of undivided bliss. The heart, the tender heart, has no self-existing principle of happiness, but reposes upon a thousand sweet dependences for all its raptures! Say, shall I not construe thy silence into a tacit coincidence with assertions thy own feelings must have often made? Or, if

thou art still a sceptic, look on thyself with *my* eyes, and be a *convert*: behold the bright intelligence of that countenance, those blessings which invest the throne of genius; those eyes, so dangerous in their softness, so bewitching in their vivacity; and those fugitive graces, which leave the gaze of admiration in sweet suspense where to fix a charm which is every where discernible; then wouldst thou say with me, Nature never designed so fair a work to grace a convent's gloomy cell."

Overwhelmed, confused, secretly delighted, but apparently displeased, the native delicacy rather than the prudence of Imogen represented to her the impropriety of listening to such language, in such a situation, and from such a person as now addressed her in a strain too grateful not to be dangerous. Almost trembling with emotion, she drew her veil over her face, and said: "How our conversation has wandered so widely from its first point I know not; but methinks thou didst begin it by invoking my sympathy to thy sufferings: judging of them by my own, I have more than pitied thee. But see! the lights already glimmer in the casements of the chateau; and probably the lady Magdelaine will speedily require thy attendance in the study." Then turning away, she was slowly retiring, when the minstrel, springing after her, caught her robe.

"Yet stay!" said he eagerly; "for such a moment may never again return."

"And what then?" said Imogen, coldly disengaging her robe.

"To *thee*, lady, nothing; but to me—for such a moment I would gladly forfeit an age of common-place existence. Oh, withdraw not from me this fair hand, but suffer me to breathe on it those effusions of gratitude thy condescension has already excited."

"Forbear, forbear!" exclaimed Imogen, with difficulty releasing her hand: "already hast thou taught me the extent of my imprudence, and to repent it."—She instantly glided away; and, flying through the alley, entered the tapestry-room, now only faintly lit up by the moonlight, and almost breathless reached her own little apartment. She threw herself on her couch, and pressing her hand to

her heart, as if to check its ardent palpitation, gave a loose to that flow of sweet and novel emotion, that train of interesting and animated reflection, which involved her mind and flurried her spirits almost to wildness.

She had for the first time conversed with a being, whose mind and sentiments, sympathizing with her own, could enter into all the delicate minutæ of her feelings. She had for the first time participated in that sweet commutation of ideas which forms life's best blessing, by which the sublimer powers of nature are called into action, and attain the highest perfection the soul can reach. Her mind, hitherto like a fine instrument rich in passive powers, now for the first time vibrated to the magic touch of sympathy; and her heart-unfolded many latent principles of delight, to whose possession she was hitherto a stranger; while fancy and imagination flung their glowing drapery around those visions of bliss which stole their existence from the consciousness of her newly-awakened feelings. The sanguine joys of youth and inexperience live but in the present; the past and the future are alike given to oblivion; and sad experience has not yet awakened into life the suggestions of doubt, the precepts of caution.

Imogen was happy, even to delirium; and, lost in the pleasant illusion to which her whole soul was resigned, the morning dawn broke through her casement ere she pressed a pillow which had hitherto never been the witness of a sleepless night.

CHAP. VII.

Conforme era l'etate
Ma il pensier piu conforme.

TASSO.

Non ; ce n'est ni par choix ni par raison d'aimer,
Qu'en voyant ce qui plait on se laisse enflammer.
D'un aveugle penchant le charme imperceptible
Frappe, saisit, entraine, et rende un cœur sensible ;
Et par un inscrutable et necessaire loi,
On se livre à l'amour sans qu'on sache pourquoi.

T. CORNEILLE.

Four days had been allotted for the consistorial visit of the father director at St. Menhoulm, and three of the four had already expired. The minstrel was not only installed in his literary avocation, but proved himself adequate to the task he had undertaken, by a knowledge of the learned languages beyond what might have been expected in the eleemosynary pupil of the brothers of *les jettits Augustins*.

This discovery of the intellectual perfection of her secretary, heightened by the modesty which had concealed it, did not lessen the prepossession his personal graces had awakened in lady Magdelaine's bosom. His influence increased with hourly addition, and his attendance in the study was required at an earlier and protracted to a later moment than had hitherto been usual with the lady Magdelaine herself to devote to her lucubrations.

Imogen's attendance was less strictly required, and her little desk was removed to a remote corner of the apartment, while the minstrel wrote at the same table with the lady Magdelaine. Imogen was employed in copying from the fathers, or in making extracts from the Lives of the Ten Thousand Martyrs, and the Eleven Thousand Virgins ; while the minstrel transcribed the sentiments of lady Magdelaine on the fervour of holy love, seraphic raptures, and religious transports ; and the lady Magdelaine, in those discussions which so frequently interrupted the labours of her secretary, talked more of Ovid than saint Bonaventure, and quoted Sappho almost as often as

saint Genevieve: accompanying her commentary with a look so relevant to the theme, that the minstrel must have been very deficient in penetration or vanity, not to have observed the abstract devotion of his learned patroness; who was not a little animated by the presence of a sensible object, as the shrine and statue frequently stimulate that exertion of piety offered to the relics and the saints.

Meantime the novice and the minstrel continued to each other little more than "a shadow to a shade." Confused and overwhelmed by the consciousness of those feelings which had insinuated themselves into her bosom, timid and doubtful of herself, the young novice of saint Dominick exchanged the infatuating candour and playful ingenuousness of her character, for a reserve, a diffidence, a thousand times more dangerous; and the minstrel, apparently awed into distance by the reserve she assumed, and pursued by the vigilance of lady Magdelaine, only returned her coldness with that

" Silence that speaks, and eloquence of eyes :"

but, constantly associated in the same pursuits, their accordant feelings slumbered not over those fine and impalpable indications of sympathy, which a glance indicated, a blush betrayed.

The fibre of connection which exists between the eye and the soul, served as a conductor to their mutual emotion, and gave the electric spark of passion a mutual influence. This touching silence, this delicate and enforced reserve, shed over their sentiments that veil of mystery, in which the dawn of passion loves to enshroud itself, and which the maturity of tenderness ever looks back to with fond regret: yet it was evident the ardent emotions of the minstrel with difficulty brooked the restraint he laboured under; nor could even the awful presence of the lady Magdelaine check those sallies of vivacity, that hyperbole of ironic compliment to her genius, or that sarcastic equivoque, with which he commented on some extraordinary passages in her literary works. Imogen trembled for his temerity: but the minstrel felt he could err with impunity; and, pleased with the privilege, took

advantage of the only immunity it could confer, as an indemnification for those of which it deprived him.

Meantime the domestic subjects of Montmorell commented on the enviable situation of the new secretary, with a variety of observation. The women were disappointed, for the harp was laid aside, or seldom heard till the family had retired to rest; and then only from the open casement of the minstrel's apartment. The men complained of upstart airs, and affected superiority; and Theodore, the young page, with a sigh acknowledged, that he hated, envied, and admired him above all human beings! Such was the political state of the castle, when the father director, on the moment of his return from St. Menhoulm, proceeded to the lady Magdelaine's apartment; and in the large green velvet arm-chair, of which he had been the sole occupant for near five years, and close by the easy chair of the lady Magdelaine, beheld the minstrel seated, or rather lolling in an easy attitude, while the lady Magdelaine read aloud the last chapter he had transcribed.

Had a spectre blasted the gaze of father Anselm, his countenance could not have exhibited stronger emotions of surprise, anger, and disappointment: but, accustomed to resist the influence of nature under all her variations, the duplicity of his character prevailed; and with assumed composure he advanced towards the lady Magdelaine, who, receiving him with undisguised confusion, instantly dismissed the minstrel.

Scarce was the friar seated, when the lady Magdelaine entered on a vindication of her conduct in respect to her new secretary, with an eagerness that ever defeats the purpose it is meant to effect; and availing herself of the *equivogue*, that she had not received the stranger in his gay profession of a minstrel, but in the sober avocation of a secretary, hoped to make her peace with the director for the violation of her promise, and her disregard of those admonitions which he had so strongly pointed against the minstrel's longer residence at the chateau.

The friar received her excuse in silence, and immediately turned the conversation on another topic, without a single commentary on that which had been just discuss-

ed; while the lady Magdelaine, surprised and delighted by a silence which she construed into a perfect coincidence with her wishes, put a purse into his hands, when he arose to retire, to distribute, she said, as his judgment and charity should direct, but in reality to reward an acquiescence so little expected.

The friar had no sooner disappeared, than she sent for her new favourite with a confidence she had not experienced since his inauguration. Three successive days flew rapidly away; the civil wars were re-illuminated in the province, and political discussion seemed, for an interval, to usurp the place of that strong partiality and aversion the minstrel had awakened in the bosoms of the lady Magdelaine and her confessor; while a thousand favourable and precious chances secured to the minstrel the happiness of beholding or conversing with the novice of St. Dominick. One morning, after a long, and perhaps wearisome, conference with the father director, the lady Magdelaine sent for her amanuensis into the study; and, not disposed for composition, she put the Confessions of St. Augustin into his hands, and reclined on a couch; while her young secretary read aloud those self-reproba-tions of the good bishop of Hippo, which present such a struggle between grace and passion, piety and nature: and already had he made a considerable progress in the detail of human frailty, which the sincerity rather than the prudence of the saint betrayed, when the door flew open, and the friar appeared pushing in Imogen before him, and pointing towards a paper he held in his hand. "Behold, madam," said he, "the pious effusions of a novice of the holy order of St. Dominick, whose inspirations, though of a late date, and whose theme"—

"Father!" interrupted Imogen wildly, the shining moisture of her eye swelled to the tear of passion, her face and neck covered with blushes, and every feature despoiled of its sweet and tranquil expression;—"father, restore me that paper: it is mine; intended for no eye but mine; and to expose those secret, though in-consequent thoughts, you have forcibly possessed yourself of, is equally a breach of principle and honour."

"Principle and honour," said the friar sarcastically, "well become the lips of one who meditates the violation of every sacred vow, tramples on the modest decorums of her sex, and perverts those gifts with which Providence has endowed her, to——"

"Father," again faintly interrupted Imogen, "'tis impossible to defend what is not even understood; but——"

"Such deficiency of comprehension is convenient," said the friar, with a sneer; "but to speak more unequivocally, I should have said that this new object of your poetic devotion, in engrossing that time, those talents, and those meditations, which should only be used to the glory of God,——"

"What new object?" demanded the lady Magdelaine, almost breathless.

"Oh, father," exclaimed Imogen, eagerly interrupting his reply, "thou wouldst not have me believe any act of mine can in aught add to or detract from the glory of supreme perfection? there is impiety in the thought."

"Away," said the friar: "no more will I listen to the caviling of thy puerile, though profane sophistry: go to thy chamber and invoke the saints in thy behalf; for the spirit of heresy is fastened on thee, and drags thee towards eternal perdition!"

"Merciful heaven!" exclaimed the minstrel, starting forward with uncontrolled emotion, and pointing towards Imogen: "look on that countenance, father, behold in it the image of divinity itself, the inviolable sanctity of virtue; listen to the sentiments which flow from those pure lips; compare them with the blameless excellence of the life they illustrate; then threaten this guileless, this perfect being with eternal destruction, if you dare!"

"If I dare!" retorted the friar, a livid hue overspreading his countenance, his whole frame convulsed with agitation; then, after a successful struggle of a moment, he added in a tone of resignation, and smiting his breast, "dare! but it is well. Suffer me, lady, to retire; thy castle, I well foresee, can no longer afford a safe and honourable asylum to thy poor beadsman; insulted, bearded, even in thy presence, let not the meekness of the chris-

tion sully the dignity of my holy vocation." Then with a look of humble resignation, he let his crosier fall within his arms, raised his eyes to heaven, and retired in silence.

The faculties of the lady Magdelaine seemed bound, as by the spell of magic. The oblique hints of the friar, so pregnant with mortification, so capable of insinuating the poison of jealousy, though only expressed by self-interest, to awaken distrust; the temerity of the minstrel, in boldly avowing himself the champion of the apostate novice, including in his vindication so many personal eulogiums and enthusiastic praises; and the sudden departure of her director; left the lady Magdelaine for some time, not only immoveable but speechless: at length, recovering in some degree from the influence of her overwhelming emotions, she cast an angry glance at the minstrel, and exclaimed with affected calmness, "Although vulgar indignation loves to deal in ellipsis and aposiopesis, philosophy disdains the language of passion, nor can even hypocrisy or ingratitude rouse it from its perpetual calm. Yet thy temerity, young stranger, might well sanction such evident resentment as was displayed by the philosopher Phyre, the Elean, who pursued his cook even to the market-place, with a spit in his hand, for a trifling offence: yet I will only admonish thee, that thy further residence at Montmorell depends upon the prudent circumspection of thy conduct, and the respect and deference thou payest to that holy man, whose sacred character, but now, thou daredst to insult: but as for thee, insidious serpent, whose mind has as many cunning devices, as a chileagonum has angles,"— Imogen, who till now stood overwhelmed and silent, raised her timid glances, and attempted to interrupt the lady Magdelaine, whose philosophy, however becomingly observed towards the minstrel, seemed now nearly reduced to the same ebb as that of the sage of Elea; while her stern eye, turned towards the beautiful countenance of the novice, stole from thence new fuel for her rage.

"Peace!" cried the lady Magdelaine, "I will not be imposed on by thy duplicity: to-morrow restores thee

to thy convent ; there thou wilt have time to reflect on thy ingratitude, and to repent it."

The tear which had fallen on the cheek of Imogen, dried on its glowing surface ; the fire of indignant pride flashed from her languid eye ; and she retired in silence, and with an air of native dignity, which, opposed to the affected hauteur of the lady Magdelaine, marked the vast difference between the inborn greatness of the soul, and the ostentatious pride of a mean and self-sufficient mind. Almost at the same moment the lady Magdelaine quitted the apartment, in order to follow the friar, and deprecate the wrath of a being who, raised from nothing by her ill-bestowed bounty, had obtained an influence over her mind and actions she had neither the penetration to discover nor the power to obviate ; leaving her new favourite, as she believed, to " chew the food of sweet and bitter fancy," and to repent the temerity which she wished him to suppose had nearly forfeited her favour for ever. Nothing, however, was farther from the favourite's thoughts ; his eye had for some time impatiently dwelt on the paper he had seen fall from the friar's trembling hands, and which he supposed contained the subject of Imogen's accusation ; and no sooner had the lady Magdelaine left the apartment than he eagerly gathered up the fragments, which had been the efficient cause of the foregoing scene. It was so torn and defaced, probably in the struggle between the friar and the novice, that it would have been illegible to any eye but that which now endeavoured to devour its contents : it contained a few unfinished stanzas, of some poetical merit. That they were addressed to himself, although he believed never intended for his inspection, the minstrel soon discovered ; and that they flowed with the warmest sentiments of admiration, he was not long in developing. The poetess at once professed his genius to be the theme of her song, and the model of her imitation : she dwelt with enthusiasm on the charm that lurked in his lyre, and the spell that breathed in his voice. She personified him as the genius of minstrelsy, and, under the sanction of her own fanciful image, worshipped him she had immortalized ! while her heart, trembling for the

ardour of her imagination, frequently appeared to check its daring flights; and her modesty, suspecting the treachery of her heart, veiled with a timid hand the warmth of its glowing dictates.

The minstrel would have regretted that this little effusion had been left unfinished, could any regret have insinuated itself into a heart overwhelmed by those rapturous emotions which the first conviction of awakening reciprocal admiration, and delighting those, with whom we have long been delighted, excites: rapt, intoxicated, he read the unfinished address, not once, but twenty times; while the heart and vanity of the man were too highly gratified, to suffer the judgment of the critic to exert its powers unbiassed by partiality, uninfluenced by self-love: the poem therefore was exquisite, and the poetess more than ever divine!

Imogen had fled from the lady Magdelaine's apartment to her own, where she passed the remainder of the day in tears. Her proud heart swelled with indignation, at the unmerited severity she had been treated with before the minstrel; and every delicate and refined feeling recoiled on itself, and agonized to the recollection of those oblique hints which the friar let fall of her partiality to the young stranger; trembling with apprehension lest the subject of her poetical inspiration should behold a witness that might be construed into the strongest confirmation of the friar's surmises; and recollecting that the friar had dropped her little poem, although her agitation on leaving the room had prevented her executing the intention of securing it, she hastily rose and fled to lady Magdelaine's study, in the hope of still finding it there; but the most diligent search was fruitless.

Disappointed and low-spirited, she was returning to her apartment, when the reviving freshness of the evening air drew her towards the open casement of the gallery through which she passed. It was the hour of vespers; all the family, herself excepted, were still in the chapel, and the castle was involved in a solemn silence that corresponded with the scene which at once attracted her gaze and spoke peace to her wounded spirits.

The sun was setting with uncommon splendour; and the clouds, concentrating on their surface a thousand vivid rays, sometimes assumed the appearance of floating mountains, emitting from their luminous points flashes of living gold, and sometimes streaming like meteors through the deep blue of the glowing atmosphere. Scarce a breeze panted on the verdant foliage, and the spirit of peace seemed to expand its *pennons* o'er the soft solemnity of the hour; while the crescent moon, already displaying her silver horn, bathed her beams in the waters of the Aisne, whose bosom was darkened by the lengthening shadows of the castle's lofty turrets. It was a scene finely in unison with the feelings of Imogen: her eyes dwelling on the glories of the creation, a religious rapture diffused itself around her; and with all her glowing emotions "thick about her," she bent one knee to the ground, and offered up that incense of the heart, "*whose fragrance smells to heaven.*"

Her spirits calmed, her feelings sublimed, by this pious indulgence of her soul's grateful effusions, she arose to retire, when turning round she perceived the minstrel leaning against a pillar near the spot where she stood. He darted forward to detain her, as with a hurried pace she was retiring.

"Not by a sigh," said he, catching the drapery of her robe, "not *even* by a sigh, would I violate the sanctity of thy holy occupation; yet now thy orisons to heaven are finished, turn, fair saint, and grant that hearing to another which but now haply thou invokedst for thyself."

Surprise and confusion for a moment held Imogen in suspense whether to obey the dictates of her prudence or her wishes; and the minstrel, taking advantage of her dubious silence, led her gently back, and continued: "May Heaven grant thy petition, as thou hast acceded to mine; and may happiness be as liberally bestowed on thee as thou hast power to bestow it on others!"

"Mine were not prayers of supplication," said Imogen smiling, "but the effusions of the heart, grateful for blessings conferred, throbbing with rapture and delight."

"Such then be mine!" said the minstrel with impassioned earnestness; "and here on this beauteous hand

suffer me to offer up the effusions of a heart, grateful indeed for blessings conferred, yet still presumptuously claiming."

Imogen in confusion snatched away her hand, and would have instantly withdrawn; but the minstrel, again catching the drapery of her robe, exclaimed: "Forgive, oh! forgive the temerity of an imprudent, who, borne away by the impetuosity of those feelings your presence is but too much calculated to inspire, finds even the respect he owes you inadequate to resist their influence."

"I entreat," said Imogen faintly, "you will suffer me to retire."

"If," continued the minstrel, "I hear about me some secret cause of your too evident antipathy, suffer me to withdraw; but oh! let me not intrude upon those sweet meditations of a refined and superior mind, or banish thee from the contemplation of a scene so beautiful and sublime; so congenial to a taste alive to all that is most exquisite in either; a scene where a moral interest attracts the heart, and pensive memory loves to identify that spot sacred to *Eloisa and Abelard**."

"To *Eloisa and Abelard*!" returned Imogen starting.

"Behold," continued the minstrel, artfully fascinating her attention, and insensibly drawing her back to the casement, "behold that mountain, whose base the moon's fantastic light now silvers; beneath its sheltering height repose the mouldering ruins of the Paraclete."

"Alas!" said Imogen, with awakened enthusiasm, "why has the knowledge of a circumstance so interesting been so long denied me?"

"Because," said the minstrel, "thy unkind destiny has thrown thee among those, who, dead to the finer feelings of the soul, reject the higher joys which taste and fancy give; whose barren hearts, wrapt in their own self-adoring pride, ne'er stole a pleasure, save what self-love inspired; and whose contracted minds, deceived by pious fraud, seek heaven on motives as selfish as the means

* The Paraclete monastery was founded in the diocese of Troyes, Champagne, by Abelard, who was interred with Eloisa in an adjoining monument.

they pursue to attain their end are childish and puerile. But, oh sweet enthusiast! thou whom the fire of genius warms; whom thought, feeling, and taste, raise in the scale of thinking beings even above thy species; 'tis for thy rapt fancy to consecrate the scene sacred to departed genius; 'tis for thy warm sensible heart to pay the homage of a sigh o'er the spot sacred to the remembrance of unequalled but unfortunate love."

The gratified ambition, the gratified heart of Imogen sent a glow to her cheek as she replied:

"In the stillness of a fine evening, when the setting sun had flung his glowing beams on those picturesque ruins which skirt the mountain's base, it should seem that an intuitive something led me to their contemplation; and my eager gaze has dwelt on them till fancy's mimic powers peopled the deserted shades with forms wild and fantastic, and gave to every mouldering dome, to every ruined cloister, an appropriate inhabitant."

"And yet," said the minstrel with a sigh, "that scene of savage desolation was once the sad retreat of youth, beauty, and genius; of love unsubdued, of passion too potent for reason, or even religion, to conquer. It was beneath the shelter of that wild and gloomy valley the unfortunate and enamoured Abelard fixed the last residence of his heart's idol. He sought a scene congenial to the sombre temper of his own feelings, and the unerring sympathy of love taught him to believe in unison with those of his wretched mistress. Perhaps as he watched the progress of that gloomy pile, tomb of his joys! as he wandered in the restless agitation of despairing love amidst those savage scenes, he has fixed his eye upon that silver orb that now fascinates our gaze, and exclaimed, as *I do now*, "Beautiful planet! witness of my passion and my woes! here on this spot haply thou shalt fling thy beams upon my love, and illumine her dreary path of midnight meditation, when far from this abode of peace the wretched Abelard, pursued by envy, persecuted by malice, shall consume a life of wretchedness, for ever lost to love and happiness!" The minstrel, in agitation, paused, and fixed his impassioned gaze on

the tearful eyes of Imogen, who with a profound sigh ejaculated, "Alas! unhappy Abelard!"

The minstrel took her unresisting hand, and in a softened voice exclaimed: "You weep, you sigh; for Abelard's unhappy destiny you sigh. Give then, lovely maid, thy tears, thy sighs, to me; for his sufferings are mine, but not his joys. Misery raised not her bitter cup to *his* lip till he had quaffed the rosy draught of bliss to its last precious drop. He loved, and was beloved. Destiny divided him from the object of his tenderness, but her passion survived the power of absence: living he was adored, and in death united to her. But oh! it is only for him to complain who has never felt the transport of reciprocal passion; whose ardent, glowing feelings prey on themselves; and whose tender, impassioned heart is consumed by a sacred, secret, unrequited love!"

"And is that possible?" said Imogen in a faltering accent; "can a heart, can a soul, capable of such profound emotion, such refined tenderness, such delicate and proud reserve, throb with unrequited passion?"

"'Tis for you to decide," said the minstrel, dropping on one knee: "Imogen, beloved as soon as seen! Imogen, these moments are furtive as they are precious; they will admit of no studied detail of passion, nor can I tell thee aught the sweet intimations of the heart have not whispered thee. Perish the love that calls on cold formal declarations to betray its existence! Perish those affections which every emotion, every glance, every word, does not testify! Oh, Imogen, remove that envious veil. I ask not for confirmation, but for hope; I ask not to violate the reserve of thy sacred delicacy, but to supplicate thy compassion: turn then not from me those eyes; let me read in them the movements of thy soul, let them be the arbiters of my fate, let their beams give life to my hopes, or banish me from thee for ever!"

The minstrel, with the timid hand of love, drew aside the gauze which veiled the face of Imogen. Then her full eye met his, her frame trembled, she leaned on the minstrel's shoulder for support; she wept, but wept delicious tears; and Joy might have purchased with his best smile the sigh that stole from her lip.

The minstrel gazed on her for a moment in speechless ecstasy, and Silence seemed enamoured of the pause which Rapture had created. Imogen was the first to destroy the sweet illusion: she started from the supporting arm of the minstrel, cast around a quick and fearful glance, then uttered a faint scream, and would have fled. The minstrel's circling arm detained her. "Merciful heaven!" said he; "in a moment such as this, whence this strong emotion of terror? Does Imogen repent a condescension too dubious for even love's ardent wishes to construe into more than pity?"

"Didst thou not see or hear any thing?" said Imogen trembling.—"What should I see or hear but Imogen? Have I at this moment a sense, a thought, a feeling, that is not all Imogen?"

"As heaven is my witness, I beheld the lady Magdelaine and the father director glide from behind that pillar, and go out at that door."

"Indeed!" said the minstrel thoughtfully.

A faint ejaculation from the novice (who reeled towards a pillar) was all the answer he received; and at the same moment he found himself violently seized by the collar, and surrounded by some of the domesticks of the chateau, with the friar and lady Magdelaine, who exclaimed, "Seize the traitor! bear him instantly to the western tower." The servants obeyed: the minstrel struggled, and opposed their efforts with Herculean strength; but overcome by numbers, as they tore him away he fixed his eyes on Imogen (who, the living image of terror, still clung to the pillar for support), and as he passed her, wildly exclaimed: "Heaven guard and protect thee, thou suffering excellence, from the persecuting spirit of envy and oppression! and oh!"—Ere he could finish the sentence he was dragged away, and Imogen fell lifeless to the earth.

CHAP. VIII.

And shall I here abide the shot
 Of angry eyes, not comforted to live
 But that there is this jewel in the world
 That I may see again? SHAKSPEARE.

Ah dolente partits
 Ah piu dell mia vita
 Da te parte, e non moro, e pur io prove
 La pena della morte
 E sento nel partire.
 Un vivace morire;
 Ch'ella vita al dolore
 Per fa che moja immortalemente il cuore.

INTEREST was in the breast of the father Anselm the universal dissolvent, before which every other passion and sentiment disappeared. Nothing had been further from his mind than to quit the chateau de Montmorell, and leave his young competitor in undisturbed possession of all those precious immunities he had himself so long been endowed with; yet still with well-timed policy he secluded himself from the presence of the lady Magdelaine; nor could she obtain from the haughty and self-sufficient priest the audience of a moment, until, returning from vespers, she entreated a moment's conversation with him relative to the circumstances of the morning; and the father, feigning an intention of going that night to a friary of his own order on the skirts of the forest, refused to enter the chateau until he received her promise that the minstrel should be dismissed from it the following morning. But the friar had hitherto only to contend with the head of lady Magdelaine; he had now, for the first time, to enter the lists with her heart; and when a woman's heart is reduced even to the last extremity, her ingenuity seldom fails to bring in a *corps de reserve* to its assistance.

"My dear father," said the lady Magdelaine, "your better judgment is for once overshot by your unsuspecting simplicity; far from turning this young stranger adrift, let us secure him a prisoner, until he can make some discovery of what he is; for my mind mis-

gives me he is other than his seeming betokens:—times such as these sanction every suspicion, and—”

The lady Magdelaine made a sudden pause, caught the friar by the arm, and stopped beneath a casement, from whence the minstrel's voice distinctly issued. Five minutes breathless attention to the conversation of the minstrel, which in the stillness of the evening reached her ears, deprived the lady Magdelaine not only of her philosophic coolness, but her christian equanimity. Her sallow cheek glowed with the rage of jealousy, her eyes flashed fire; she hurried into the chateau, followed by the triumphant friar, and as she passed through the great hall, ordered some of the domestics to accompany her instantly to the gallery, to seize on the minstrel, and confine him in the western tower till they received further orders. The command was uttered with feudal sternness, and obeyed with feudal exactitude.

The lady Magdelaine retired to her apartment in agitation too evident to escape the observance of the friar, who no longer insisted on going that evening to the friary of the Cistercian brothers.

Neither the discovery of the minstrel at Imogen's feet, which she had herself witnessed, the mortifying blow her vanity had received, nor the arguments of the friar, were sufficient to counteract the partiality which the young secretary had awakened in the heart of his patroness. Her passion, like other propensities of dotage, increased by opposition; and, with a fondness almost childish, grew wayward and testy as its darling wishes were opposed.

The morning after the minstrel's confinement, the friar, attended by a number of the domestics, was dispatched to lead the young culprit into the presence of the offended lady, to be tried for the high crime and misdemeanor of preferring youth, beauty, and genius, to age, ugliness, and pedantry; for, notwithstanding the well-feigned suspicions by which she meant to temporize with the aversion and prejudice of the friar, the lady Magdelaine had no fault to find with the minstrel, no suspicion to satisfy, save what envy and jealousy gave birth to. Neither the rigid nerves nor composed pulses of the

philosophess could withstand the agitation the expected appearance of the minstrel excited; and footsteps approaching her study-door gave a new throb to her heart, when the friar entered, followed by her other emissaries, who, with countenances full of importance, all seemed eager to speak.

"I congratulate you, madam," said the friar: "your dangerous guest is fled. The criminality of his intentions anticipated your scrutiny, and he fled from that retribution his hypocrisy and ingratitude merited."

"Fled!" repeated the lady Magdelaine, pale with surprise and disappointment; "fled! impossible! the door locked, and the key in my possession!"

"But the window was but ill secured," said the friar; "we found one of the bars wranched away, and a breach made in the frame; and though its height is considerable, desperation is not to be intimidated by probable dangers when certain peril awaits it."—"Besides, with humble deference," said Ambrose, bowing, "there is no coping with conjuration; and if this same monsieur troubadour had not been deep in the black art, he could never have set our damsels' wits adrift with his roundelays and romances; nor, with all humility be it spoken, would he have got into such marvellous great favour with my lady, who set her face against him, as one may say, from the beginning."

"Peace!" interrupted the lady Magdelaine, glad to have an opportunity of venting her stifled rage on her servants, whom she now accused as the efficient cause of the minstrel's reception at the chateau, and whose negligence had favoured his escape. Then suddenly recollecting herself, she eagerly demanded who had seen the demoiselle Imogen that morning? and, without waiting for an answer, dispatched a messenger for her.

When Imogen had recovered from the state of insensibility into which she had fallen in the gallery, surrounded by darkness, and a prey to the most dreadful impressions, she with difficulty crept to her own apartment, and, flinging herself on her couch, passed the night in that variety of emotion which the circumstances of the evening were calculated to inspire; yet, amidst the train of

fears, doubts, and apprehensions, that floated on her mind, one smiling sentiment was still buoyant; and to its sweet solace her harassed thoughts still turned for repose, and found felicity supreme and unalloyed. Imogen, the young, the enthusiastic, the sensible and tender Imogen, loved and was beloved! Could Imogen be otherwise than happy, in spite of the gloomy visions her timid fancy conjured to scare her hopes? Yet the blush which this delicious consciousness brought to her cheek, faded to a death-like paleness when Beatrice, who brought the lady Magdelaine's commanding message, informed her the minstrel had fled.

"Holy Mother! but it is a strange world!" said Beatrice; "it is, as Ambrose says, nothing but ups and downs. Here is the minstrel, that was every thing yesterday, is nothing to-day. But they say it was not for nothing either my lady confined him in the western tower. Some say he was a Hugonot and an unbeliever; others say he was a traitor; but most folk seem to think he was a Jew or conjuror: and Bernardine swears he heard a clap of thunder, that shook the whole chateau, just as the great clock struck twelve; which brings to my mind the story of the old astrologer, who threw himself into the moat. Thus it was, mademoiselle: it was the eve of St. Maxima, just after I came from Provence, with my old uncle, to the chateau. I remember I had on my tawny-orange fardingle, which had been only once scoured, and"—With a profound sigh Imogen interrupted her, to inquire if lady Magdelaine knew of the minstrel's escape.

"Christ! have, I been chattering like a jay all this time, and quite forgot that Theodore desired me to tell you, my lady commands you instantly to the study. I fancy 'tis about something very extraordinary; so if you will have the goodness to leave the least bit of the door open,"—

"Dear Beatrice," said Imogen, in tears, "cannot you make some excuse for me? Indeed I cannot appear before the lady Magdelaine."

"Dear mademoiselle, not I; I could not make an excuse if I was to die for it; and yet you know I would go to the end of the world to oblige you."—While Beatrice

was still speaking, Theodore himself tapped at the door with a second message; and Imogen, pale and trembling, was forced to obey.

She found the lady Magdelaine alone: who, with a brow contracted by unusual severity, and a voice almost inarticulate from rage, commanded her instantly to relate all the conversation that had passed between the minstrel and her the preceding evening in the gallery; but tears and blushes were all the answer she could obtain.

"It is then as I suspected," exclaimed the lady Magdelaine; "and a novice of the holy order of St. Dominick was on the point of becoming the prey of her own weak and foolish vanity, and the artful seductions of a low-born villain!" She then loudly expatiated on the imprudence, indecorum, and ingratitude of Imogen's conduct; and, hurried away by the influence of jealousy and disappointment, for once descended from the accustomed trope, figure, and metaphor, of her high-flown rhetoric, to speak in the more forcible and poignant language of "a woman scorned;" and, after a reproof and an exordium of an hour long, the all-enduring Imogen was sent back to her room, with the terrific threat of being immediately removed to the convent, and represented in her true colours to the abbess and the nuns.

Happily, however, for the lady Magdelaine, her amatory, like her religious propensities, required a visible object to inspire and perpetuate their ardours. Neither her faith nor her love was founded upon those spiritualized sentiments which could enable them to exist in mere conception or belief; and if the picture of a saint was necessary to stimulate her piety, the presence of the young stranger was requisite to perpetuate the tenderness he had awakened. It was not then to be wondered at that in a few days her heart resumed its wonted callosity, the friar his boundless influence; that the foundation of the monastery was again an object of interest, and the Crusades pursued with accustomed vigour. Even Imogen was again reinstated in the honours of the *escrutoire*, and her profession put off until the Crusades should be finished, which were now hastening to a conclusion; while poor St. Bonaventure claimed his old station, to the dis-

comfiture of Ovid, and the Odes of Sappho were resigned in honour of the Miracles of St. Theresa.

The castle again resumed its wonted tranquil uniformity; and the adventure of the extraordinary stranger, whose presence, like a blazing meteor, spread temporary confusion, amazement, and admiration, was now ranked among the established tales and gossip stories "told by the winter fire," and wondered at as often as told.

Love knows no inequality; it discovers in, or bestows on, its object every thing that excites interest or constitutes perfection. The sympathies of the heart are deaf to the arbitrary suggestions of pride: and even the disadvantages of birth or fortune serve but as *basso relievo*, which raise their possessor superior to destiny, and mark him the favourite of heaven, though reckless of the world's perishable treasures.

Never for a moment had Imogen reflected that the minstrel held a rank in the world, which at that period was neither respected nor eligible; that he was a foundling, a wanderer, and, lastly, the hired servant of the lady Magdelaine; still less had she confounded him with the domestics of the chateau. With whom indeed could she assimilate him? for with *her* he held a distinct place in the creation, and from the moment she first beheld him he appeared more than human, and every one else appeared less.

The new, the profound, the sweet emotions which had influenced the flow and ebb of her reflections during the minstrel's residence at the chateau, now only at intervals thrilled on her heart; while the pensive sadness of disappointed hope, of disappointed love, hung its perpetual gloom o'er the mind, the manners, the brow of the novice: and though constitutional vivacity sometimes lured a smile to her lip, the heart's dejection ever pursued the lovely stranger with a tear; and yet, enamoured even of her misery, since it was remotely connected with all she had ever known of bliss, she cherished the source of her affliction, nor would have exchanged her present sufferings for all the calm of her former indifference.

There are rapturous sentiments, rapturous recollections, that can only be too dearly purchased when virtue is

the price. Imogen had known them, yet Imogen was innocent: she therefore suffered acutely but patiently. "And can one so easily part with what one so dearly loves?" said she one morning, as she sat thinking on the minstrel's sudden flight: "if so, then it is not love I feel." No witness is requisite to excite the blush of refined sensibility. Imogen started at the thought, which had not escaped her lips, but her heart, and hid her face in her veil, to conceal her blushes even from herself. Then hurrying from the reflection, she attempted to account for that sudden departure of the minstrel, which had awakened it. "Whatever were the accusations," said she, "the lady Magdelaine had to allege against the amiable young stranger, they were of a mysterious nature, for they still remain locked up within her own breast. Although they must have been the cause of his departure, yet would I stake all that is dearest to me on earth he was innocent; for oh! surely guilt never hung her gloom on a brow like his, nor vice polluted the soul of one whose sentiments breathed the spirit of virtue!"

This was indeed the conclusion of an inexperienced and enamoured heart; for the sentiments of the genius are not always illustrative of the principles of the man. But Imogen, fertile in excuses to calm those doubts appearances sanctioned of the innocence of him whom it was misery supreme to believe culpable, established the confirmation of her wishes on a stronger foundation: "I have seen little of the world," said she; "yet, from the little I have seen, and from all I have read, I have learnt that happiness and virtue have no inseparable connection; that extraordinary merit ever excites envy, and seldom escapes persecution; and that the sufferings, the dissensions of mankind arise less from their vices than from their errors and prejudices: else why does the page of history teem with the virtuous and magnanimous acts of a few heroic individuals, who lived but for the good of mankind, and died the victims of its ingratitude and persecution? Why has philosophy shrunk beneath the oppression of prejudiced ignorance; and genius, unnoticed and unknown, pined in want, and lived in wretchedness?

Alas! it is not requisite to be criminal to suffer the punishment due to vice."

The minstrel was therefore not only innocent but injured; and this self-drawn conclusion shed a new interest o'er that he had already awakened, and twined another ligament round the heart of Imogen. That warm and tender heart now reposed all its hopes of happiness on either hearing from the object of its secret homage, or in sketching such wild and fanciful plans of future bliss, as the young imagination loves to colour with its warmest tints. Each day, as it fled, left behind it a new shade of regret in the spirits of the novice, for every day and every hour fancy promised some tidings of the minstrel; and the heart, willingly receiving the grateful illusion, expiated its credulity by the pangs of consequent disappointment.

Sometimes, hurried away by the vivacity of her wishes, she would ascend the ramparts of the castle, full of vague expectations that the first object that would salute her eye from the plain below would be the minstrel himself, returning with full power to clear his character from every aspersion, and reinstate himself in the favour of lady Magdelaine; but after a long, eager gaze, the desolation of civil war gave no object to her view but ruined villages, uncultivated fields, or fugitive peasants, flying for security to the impervious wilds of the forest, and distant parties of the military, which overran the provinces in every direction; and if their picturesque appearance, as they scoured those once smiling scenes they had desolated, their beamy spears, shining armour, and waving plumes, amused her imagination, her heart denied its interest; and among the tears which stained her cheek for her own private sufferings, one drop ennobled their source for her country's woes!

One evening, returning from the ramparts, she passed near the door of the apartment once occupied by the minstrel, and heard, or fancied she heard, the tones of his harp, as she was wont, when in a still evening he played at his open casement. At first she deemed it but an illusion of her senses; but as she approached, the sound more distinctly caught her ear. Panting and

breathless with indescribable emotion, she ventured to open the door, and beheld—the page, seated at the foot of the bed, and playing on the minstrel's harp. At the sight of Imogen he started, blushed, and rose to lay by the instrument. Imogen, disappointed she knew not why, and blushing she knew not wherefore, apologized for her intrusion, and said with a smile :

“I did not know thou wert a musician, Theodore.”

“Nor am I, mademoiselle ; but it is natural to imitate what we admire.”

“Oh most natural,” sighed Imogen.

“I envied the minstrel for many reasons,” said Theodore, casting down his eyes, “and not a little for his charming musical talent. I have listened to him of a fine night, when he played on the terrace under your window, until I wept like an infant. It is strange, mademoiselle, that one should weep as much from pleasure as from pain ; nay, sometimes more.”

“Such tears are delicious !” said Imogen, gazing on the harp, over which the page leaned.

“Yes,” said Theodore, answering her looks, “this was his harp ; and there,” pointing to the bed, “lies his minstrel's habit, which my lady made him lay aside when he exchanged his minstrelsy for a clerkship.”

“And to whom do they now belong ?” said Imogen eagerly.

“His dress has remained here unnoticed, just, I believe, as he flung it himself the morning of the night he was taken a prisoner to the western tower.”

“Himself !” said Imogen with emotion, taking up the sleeve of the doublet.

“Yes,” said the page ; “it has not been removed since he slept here. This part of the castle is seldom frequented ; and the domestics, who fancied the minstrel a magician, believe there is some dangerous spell over the room : so it is never visited by any one save myself.”

“And the harp ?” said Imogen.

“Oh, true, mademoiselle, the harp—is mine.”

“Did he give it to you, Theodore ?”

“Why, mademoiselle,” said the page hesitating, “I did him a service, and he, in return, presented me with

this instrument; the only recompence I would receive, or I believe he had to offer."

"And may I ask what that service was?"

"Nay, mademoiselle, you must pardon me," said the page, changing colour; "it is of a nature not to be mentioned. Would he had his harp again, and I—!" The page stopped abruptly.

"Would you part with the harp?" said Imogen, with affected indifference.

"Would you wish for it, mademoiselle?" said the page, with a penetrating smile.

"If you would suffer me to become a purchaser," said Imogen blushing.

"Perhaps," said the young page, casting down his eyes, "you would think me too exorbitant; and I should be apt to demand more than you would be willing to grant."

"Rather say, Theodore, more than I possess."

"Not so mademoiselle; you are rich. Oh! how rich in all!"

"Your terms!" said Imogen with impatience.

"One kiss of that fair hand."

"A kiss of the hand!" said Imogen with a smile, and blushing. "Nay, Theodore, I must not take advantage of your gallantry." Then holding out her little purse, which contained some valuable coins presented to her by the minor canoness, she added, "Will you for the present accept of this, till—?"

"Holy Mother!" interrupted the page; "not for the world! SELL the harp! and to you! not for the world! Ah! mademoiselle, how little do you know—" Then, pausing abruptly, he added, after a moment's confusion and silence, "Shall I convey it to your apartment?"

"Not," said Imogen, "until you suffer me to fasten this round your neck," drawing from her own a silver reliquary. The young page, colouring with pleasure, kneeled to receive it. "It was given me by the lady abbess," said Imogen, while she fastened it round his neck, "when I left the convent, as a charm against every danger; and since," she added with an arch smile, "you seem so obstinately to adhere to your first terms, why I

believe I must give you the kiss of the hand into the bargain." The page suddenly dropped the reliquary, which he was on the point of raising to his lip, and substituted the extended hand of Imogen.

"Ah!" said the delighted boy, "I feel the charm your precious gift contains is not proof against *every* danger!"

At night she flew to her little apartment, as if the sweet inducement of a friend's welcome awaited her. Theodore, as he had promised, had left the harp there; and Imogen pressed its chords, not only with her fingers but her lips, while a refined regret insinuated itself into her mind that the page had touched those strings she would wish to believe had last confessed the minstrel's magic touch.

Some little skill on the lute, communicated by the sister Pasiphaë, and a knowledge of the science of music almost intuitive, assisted her in her progress on an instrument whose soft and plaintive tones were well adapted to the rich and various melody of her fine voice. Music soon became her only amusement, and the remoteness of her apartment favoured its pursuit unknown to lady Magdelaine. Music raised in her soul that delirium of ecstasy she was so organized to feel; and in repeating those passages which had most charmed her in the minstrel's performance, the memory of past joys awakened to the sound. The associating principle that existed between the feelings and the sense exerted its influence, and the harmony that charmed the ear gave a thrill of rapture to the heart.

The third month which followed the minstrel's departure dissolved the last fond waking dream which had hitherto flattered the hopes of Imogen; and the belief that she had been deceived equally by her own credulity and the minstrel's professions, took possession of a mind too proud, too delicate, not to agonize to the conviction. The flush of her lively sensations gradually subsided, and every degree of their progressive extinction was marked by a regret that she had been deluded into a sense of bliss that almost expired in its birth, and left behind it many a sweet and poignant recollection, to add a deeper shade of contrast on the *sullen doom* that awaited her. To that

keen vivacity of emotion which lately agitated her bosom, succeeded the pensive, settled gloom, which so frequently takes possession of the delicate and refined mind in its transition from suspense animated by hope, to hopeless certainty. Yet not alone the disappointment of a first-awakened passion produced the despondency which seized her heart, and clouded the frolic spirit of her native disposition. Hitherto the impossibility of their attainment stifled in her bosom those vague and scarcely understood ideas which pointed to society and the world. The narrow limits of that sphere she had moved in, the chill austerity of her associates, by suppressing even a hope of emancipation, reduced her to a tranquil acquiescence to a destiny equally uncongenial to her reason and her sentiments. But her intercourse with the minstrel had not only awakened a new sense of happiness in her breast; it called forth those talents which, reflected back in his praise, shone with a splendour too dazzling for the gloom of privacy and sequestration; it had roused the dormant ambition of her soul to reach that point of elevation she had been from her cradle anxious to obtain; and it confirmed those long-nourished and increasing suggestions of reason, that the profession for which she was destined was equally inimical to religion and morality, to the intentions of Providence, and the welfare of society, and which would for ever annihilate her happiness, without repaying the sacrifice by those illusions which satisfy the mind of ignorance, credulity, and superstition, for all the solid and beneficial realities it has forfeited. Add to all this, the spirit of romance ruled the mind of Imogen with no trivial influence. She lived in an age when the fantastic goddess shed her illusions over the world, and established a sovereign empire which required the united efforts of genius and reason to undermine. The warm and lively imagination of the young novice was well adapted to receive the "bright enthusiast's" inspirations, and to pursue her rapid flights and wildest fancies beyond the sober boundaries of probability, beyond the guardian wing of safety.

An elopement from the chateau had therefore long been the object of her meditation, ere her return to the

convent of St. Dominick prohibited every hope of escape. "Reason, happiness, even virtue itself," said Imogen, "sanctions the intention, though a desperate one;" while Love, in league with Fancy, lay laughing *perdu* in a corner of her heart, at the sober names given to his suggestions.

But in her plan of escape Imogen had neither end nor object; but then she had delightful adventures, novel situations, and interesting circumstances in abundance. Love too sketched out (by fond association) the character she should assume to effect her purpose; it was that of a young wandering musician. "What a sweet, sweet character!" said Imogen, with a sigh and a smile; and chance furnished her with a disguise, for the minstrel's habit still lay in the unfrequented chamber, and, like precious relics, daily received a visit from a votarist of no lukewarm devotion.

"My motive," said Imogen, "is warrantable in the eye of heaven and of nature. I will not violate the altar of the Deity by vows my heart disowns, my reason condemns. That heart tells me it can never renounce the ties, the affections of humanity; that reason disapproves it ever should; and, until I can believe a life useless to my fellow-creatures can be pleasing in the eye of my God, I will never embrace it: there remains, therefore, no other alternative but to fly from the fate that awaits me."

Unprotected, innocent, unfriended orphan! whither wouldst thou fly? what asylum opens to receive thee? what fond arms unfold to embrace thee? where wilt thou find a tender bosom on which to repose thy aching temples; where wilt thou find an affectionate heart to soothe the sufferings thine own has encountered? The world is indeed "all before thee where to chuse;" but who will confirm that choice? who will realize the fairy visions of thy sanguine expectations?

It was thus Experience should have addressed the novice: but the novice was but just eighteen; the fire of imagination, the illusions of fancy, the spirit of genius, all bewildered her senses, animated her mind, and, amidst their seducing admonitions, the "still small voice" of

Experience was unheard. Oh youth! season of delight! sweet era of premature immortality! what is there in the sober satisfaction, the cautious comforts, and solid certainties of age, to compensate for the loss of thy golden dreams? dreams which memory cherishes with enthusiasm, and after-life glances back on with a faint thrill of that rapture ye once bestowed. Hope! Genius! Virtue! 'tis in the genial bosom of youth your fairest, loveliest blossoms blow and flourish!

CHAP. IX.

Friendship makes the rights of its objects equally matters of regard with its own; and marks a mind that is innocent, candid, liberal, and susceptible of the virtues which insure the happiness of human nature.

BRUCE'S *Elements of the Science of Ethics*.

These are thinking heretics;
I should forgive them, did some upstart sect
With sharper rigours charm this headlong zeal;
But they in sooth must reason. WALPOLE.

HOWEVER romantically venturous the mind of Imogen, it required some desperate circumstance to animate her to the execution of those visionary plans her fancy had so often sketched, and which her reason still refused to ratify.

Contemptuous silence, or bigoted exhortation on the part of the friar; sharp reproof, or oblique sarcasm on that of the lady Magdelaine; with wearisome conversations on the party and religious jargon of the day; the mystery of a vision, or the miracle of a saint; the claims of the duke de Mayenne, or the heresy of the king, included the whole system of social intercourse at the chateau de Montmorell, and furnished daily aggravation to confirm the young novice in the only scheme by which she could escape the apathy of her present life, or the gloomy destiny that awaited her future. But a circumstance now occurred to steady those wavering resolutions which had long vibrated between the ardour of her wishes and the

strength of her apprehensions. The Crusades were finished: nothing prevented lady Magdelaine's visiting Paris but the unsettled state of the times, in order to send her work to the press: and the day of Imogen's return to the convent of St. Dominick was already fixed on. The lady Magdelaine, as a proof of her munificence and piety, was to pay down a large sum on the admission of her amanuensis among the holy sisterhood: and on the day of her profession, to present the convent with a rich set of altar plate. Thus the lady Magdelaine, by a stroke of sanctimonious policy, in rewarding the arduous services of her secretary, remitted a douceur to heaven, in part payment for the price of her own salvation!

There was nothing talked of at the convent but the pious zeal, and holy munificence of the lady de Montmorell; and the young novice was supposed to enter the sacred pale under the most favourable auspices. The young novice, however, was of a different opinion: with a spirit of independence that electrified the narrow minds of her patroness and the friar, she absolutely refused the offered donation of lady Magdelaine on her own account.

"If, madam," said she one day, as the lady Magdelaine and the father director were enumerating the benefits she would derive from entering the convent on such respectable terms, and furnishing many arguments to stimulate her gratitude: "if, madam, it is for my sake you are thus generous, oh, for my sake, direct your generosity in a better channel. The order of St. Dominick is the most opulent in France, and the serfs on the skirts of the forest de Montmorell, the most wretched; oppressed by famine, by all the horrors of civil war, they languish in misery and want, while safety and abundance reign in the convent of St. Dominick. Let then, madam, those wretches, who look up to you for assistance, feel that bounty it were the mockery of religion to bestow on those who, professing poverty, revel in opulence. Save me from a life for which I feel no avocation, for which I am unworthy; and suffer me to continue the most faithful of your servants, the most grateful of your friends."

"I understand you," said the lady Magdelaine with a sarcastic sneer: "suffer you to accompany me to Paris,

and prove your pious fortitude, by exposing you to the trials of temptation. No," said the lady Magdelaine, "if by my precepts or example I cannot lure a wandering soul to heaven, St. Dominick forbid I should assist in drawing a soul from it."

"Mother of God, avert that crime!" said the friar, crossing himself; "and thou, oh perverse of spirit, it now becomes *us*, who took thee from the church's guardian wing, in sacred trust, to give thee back as we received thee. Thou wert then a very saint forsooth, nor could thy piety be coped withal; miracles were expected to be performed at thy shrine, and thy name to be enrolled in the *album sanctorum* of perfection! but now, oh sad frailty of poor human nature! thou art little better than one of the wicked. But thou art young, and hast time for amendment; thou hast the examples of thirty kings and queens, who resigned the crown and sceptre for the veil and crozier; and, once wedded to a heavenly spouse, dedicated to the embraces of a superior being, thy groveling soul *shall* rise above all human passions; and after a life of piety, self-denial, and mortification, you will have a chance of dying in a religious rapture, or haply of being added to the list of holy saints!"

"The *list of martyrdom* you mean, father," said Imogen, with a flash of her wonted playful spirits.

"Martyrdom to thy sinful propensities," said the lady Magdelaine, who, in conjunction with the father, continued an exordium of more than an hour long, on the wickedness of all human affections, worldly attachments, and mortal passions; substituting invective for argument, and severity for admonition; till Imogen, wearied beyond all power of farther endurance, burst into tears, and exclaimed: "Spare, spare me now, madam, and do with me as you please." The lady Magdelaine, who trembled lest the loss of a soul should be laid to her account, and who was enraged at the spirited opposition of Imogen, now willingly believed her eloquence had effected a reformation, and that the tears of the novice flowed

"From a heart contrite, in sign
Of sorrow unfeigned and humiliation meek."

MILTON.

And a few incorrect chapters being yet to transcribe, the lady Magdelaine informed her she was not to return to the convent till that day week; and dismissed her with a gentleness to which she was little accustomed.

The convent of St. Dominick lay something less than half a league from the chateau; the path which led to it was wild and romantic; it was in her leisure hours a favourite walk with Imogen, and her visits to saint Dominick were almost as frequent as her walks; for the only friend her heart had ever acknowledged, the minor canoness, was fast verging on eternity; and the friendship, the tenderness, the compassion of the novice led her incessantly to the couch of the dying nun.

Lady Magdelaine encouraged these visits, and the abbess and the nuns received her with a cordiality that induced her to repeat them; while the minor canoness seemed to receive pleasure only through the medium of her cheering society: yet in all these visits, when confidence was most boundless, when the sanguine and ingenuous character of the novice lay bare and exposed to the penetrating eye of the canoness, and when their sentiments and opinions were discussed with mutual freedom; still, in the most concealed sanctuary of her bosom, reposed the secret of Imogen's heart. The adventures of the minstrel had reached the anxious inquiries of the curious nuns, and the minor canoness, who was ever prompt to ridicule and condemn the tittle-tattle propensities of the sisterhood, looked on it as one of their tales of wonder, nor even put Imogen's traitorous feelings to the test by an inquiry on the subject.

Imogen, who trembled lest the tenderness of her heart was but its weakness, and who dreaded the sarcastic raillery, as much as she venerated the virtue, and admired the brilliant talents of the canoness, hugged herself on her fortunate reserve, and felt proportionable courage to reveal to her, her long cherished intention of avoiding a religious life by flight; since she could not be supposed to be influenced in her dangerous attempt by the weakness of passion rather than the conviction of reason.

Three weeks had elapsed since a close attendance in the study of lady Magdelaine had allowed her to visit the

convent: on the evening of the day the above conversation took place, she obtained permission to visit the sister Pasiphae, and remain with her that night.

Accompanied by one of lady Magdelaine's women, she set out on her little pedestrian journey; and during its performance determined on acquainting the canoness with her resolution, to profit by her advice, and be decided by her opinion; while she thought she knew enough of the nun to believe she would applaud her determination, and probably assist her to realise it.

When she reached the convent, she found the nuns at vespers, all but the sister Pasiphae, who was now wholly confined to her cell; and when Imogen entered it she beheld her reclined on her couch, and apparently wrapped in a soft repose. Imogen crept towards her, and started with emotion as she observed the visible change which had taken place in her friend since she had last beheld her: her form seemed almost transparent, and to the gaze of the novice appeared little more than a beautiful anatomy; from her closed eye stole a tear, which glittered on a cheek white and polished as Parian marble; on her pale lip played a smile which, like that tear, seemed the ecstatic offspring of her dream's bright vision. The sun, as it set opposite to the narrow casement of her cell, flushed a rosy tint on her snowy drapery, and tinged her whole form with something more than human. One skeleton hand was spread on her bosom, the other rested on her lute, which lay against the couch: suddenly her seraph smile disappeared, her tear dried on her burning cheek, her countenance became convulsed, her frame shook almost to dissolution; she panted, struggled, and with a shriek that seemed to burst her heart, threw herself out of the bed. The arms of the trembling, and scarcely less agitated Imogen, received her, on whose face she fixed a wild and eager gaze; then sighing, and with a look of affectionate recognition, pressed her hand and faintly exclaimed; "Oh, how welcome is the sight of thee! thy eye alone beams peace and youthful joy; thy presence, only, cheers my drooping spirits!"

Imogen, weeping, raised her on her couch, and kneeling beside her, pressed her hand with her lips.

"How warm," said the nun, "is the pressure of thy lips, and how soothingly grateful thy tears: may they never flow but for the sorrows of another!" then shuddering, and with a look of wildness, she added, "oh, it was such a dream! so sweet, and yet so dreadful!"

"Methought indeed it was," said Imogen; "for while I watched thee as thou slept, thy countenance exhibited such strong emotions."

"And oh, well it might," said the nun emphatically, "for that dream contained the epitome of my life: Imogen, I fancied myself in that sweet era of existence, when love and hope and every joy runs high; when Pleasure twined her rosy wreaths round my polished brow, and guileless rapture thrilled on every sense. Seated amidst the embowering shades of my sweet paternal home, I beheld at my feet the object of my heart's idolatry; I felt the pressure of his lip on my trembling hand, and my ears drank the welcome sound, that in one short week death alone could divide us. Suddenly the scene was changed, and instead of the groves of Provence, I found myself in the great court of the Louvre in Paris; all was darkness and desolation! save when the lightning's flash gave to my eye the mangled forms of dying men, or bands of murderers, plunging their reeking daggers into the bosoms of unresisting victims. Prostrate to the earth, I invoked the protection of St. Bartholomew, whose festival it was: methought I beheld him on every side succouring the oppressed and rescuing the wounded; but when his eye beamed full on me, it was my love; I sprung forward and found safety in his arms; I felt the soft pressure of his embrace, I felt his tender sigh on my cheek, and his warm tears on my lip. At that moment a ghastly band rushed forward, they plunged their daggers in the bosom of my love; they dragged me from that bleeding bosom, and threw me headlong into a dreary vault, where reposed the mouldering bones of St. Dominick; then, as the monument closed o'er my head, methought I did perceive those murderers were my brothers!"

"God of heaven!" said Imogen, shuddering, "and is this the epitome of thy life?" The nun folded her hands

on her bosom, cast up her eyes to heaven, and gently waved her head, while the tears fell in large drops down her pale face.

At that moment a group of the nuns entered the cell. Although they came to make inquiries for the health of the sister Pasiphae, they all circled round Imogen as soon as they perceived her, and, in spite of the weakness of the poor invalid, were clamorous in those numerous and simple questions, their insatiate curiosity, and eternal sameness of life, rendered interesting. Imogen having satisfied them as far as lay in her power, they turned the conversation to all that had occurred at vespers: talked of father Philip's having made a most risible mistake, of the awkwardness of the officiating nun, and the old sister Urselin's having fallen asleep in the middle of a jubilate, and awakening chaunted the service of the dead; then, having exhausted all their flippant nothings, they wished the wearied canoness a good night, and took Imogen with them to pay her respects to the abbess.

As soon as the novice got liberated from the tedious homilies and drowsy exordiums of the holy mother, she flew back to the canoness: she found her something more composed, and seated at a small table on which her lamp burnt, while one of the lay sisterhood arranged her bed. She received Imogen with a melancholy smile, and welcomed her return. "I have obtained permission," said the novice, "to take possession of sister Mary's mattress, by your bed side, if she has no objection." "None in the world," said the sister significantly, happy to be dismissed from her nightly attendance, which the weakness of the invalid required.

When they were alone, Imogen entered on the subject which had brought her to the convent; she unfolded to the canoness the gradual progress of her ideas; she compared her present sense of religion with that in which she had been brought up; she candidly confessed her horror of a convent life, and her resolution to avoid it: "yet," added Imogen, "as you alone opposed the fanaticism of my infant prejudices, as you alone shed a beam upon my mind, which has never since been obscured, but spread its light with increasing brightness, to you only do I con-

side the sentiments of that mind, and the resolution they have inspired."

The canoness listened to her in extreme emotion, and, fixing her large black eyes on her face, said, with a flash of her wonted animation, "So, my young saint ! you have at last discovered there are some *spots* in our feasts of charity?" Then assuming a tone grave and impressive, she affectionately took Imogen's hand, and continued : " My dear child, there are certain principles, which the very constitution of our natures lead us to receive ; immutable truths, which come home with resistless force to every bosom ; and though obscured by those prejudices born amidst the profound ignorance of early ages, confirmed by time, and that passive indolence by which men take up their opinions upon trust, and avoid the trouble of thinking for themselves, yet the human mind, in its progressive state, is still propelled towards perfection, and gradually shakes off its errors. In the words of an Italian poet :

' Come d'autunno le foglie
L'uno appresso delle altra infin che'l tamo
Prinde alla terra tutte le sue spoglie*.'

All therefore that you have now related to me of the change which has taken place in your sentiments, pleases without amazing me ; since it confirms what I have always believed, that reason, when suffered to take its course, will ever confirm the universal principles of truth and nature, and distinguish, amidst the various documents of human education, the good from the bad ; adhering with firmness to the former, and rejecting the latter with humility.

" When in thy infant years I beheld thee, and all thy blooming virtues, sacrificed at the sanguinary altar of fanaticism, I pitied thee ; when in the cloisters of saint Dominick I beheld the proud ambition of genius soaring beyond the narrow limits of destiny, I admired thee : and now, that I find thy reason asserting its rights, thy nature recoiling from the barbarous distinctions created by per-

* Dante, Inferno.

verted religion, not by the spirit of true holiness, from the horrors of fanaticism, from the errors of superstition, I revere thee.

"But here my commendations end; for here the wondrous strength of thy mind ceases to operate, and the suggestions of a wild romantic imagination guide thy efforts: elope! whither, where, to whom, by what means, and for what end?"

"Alas," said Imogen sighing, "that I never thought of: but of this I am certain, a fate more dreadful than now awaits me I cannot encounter."

"Thou sayest true," said the nun emphatically; "my heart can best aver how fatally true! But is there, my sweet imprudent, no medium between certain and probable destruction; is there no friend to save thee from immolation?"

"On earth," said Imogen, embracing the canoness's knees, "I own no friend but thee."

The nun, bending forward, folded her arms around her, and let fall a tear on her cheek. "That tear," said Imogen, as it mingled with her own, "is my assurance thou wilt assist me to escape the doom that awaits me; wilt thou not?"

"And it is to me," said the nun, raising and embracing her, "to me thou dost apply for relief; to me, who have sworn on the altar of my God, to violate every law, human and divine, he has implanted in my breast, to obliterate the affections he has braced on my soul, and to render others as wretched, were that possible, as myself: knowest thou not that I am bound to destroy, to abhor, all who dare think differently from the way I have been taught myself to think, and that I should deliver thee over to inquisitorial horrors, rather than, by commiserating thy fate, sanction thy apostacy?"

"Alas," said Imogen trembling, as the lamp's blue flame flashed in the wild and convulsed countenance of the nun, "alas, if you desert me, then am I a wretch indeed."

"Desert thee!" said the nun recovering, and with an air of tenderness, "desert thee, thou sweet victim, never! yet the world deserted *me* when at thy age; with all thy

warm and social affections, I was entombed within this convent; here withered the bloom of my heart's first love; here died my hopes, never to live again!" Then taking a medallion from her bosom, and touching a spring, it flew open, and presented to the eye of Imogen two beautiful portraits: "Behold," continued the nun, "this fair representative of youth and vivacity; such once was Pasiphae, and this beautiful and manly countenance was——" The nun paused, and for a moment concealed her face in her veil; then with less emotion continued: "the chevalier de Sorvell and Rosalie de Vilette, after an attachment of some years, founded on a sympathy of talent and pursuit, received the sanction of their friends to their union. The brothers of Rosalie, high in favour with Charles IX., were implicated in the horrors of St. Bartholomew, and became the avenging ministers of their diabolical monarch: at the moment that De Sorvell, like the Spirit of Mercy, flew from side to side, protecting, rescuing, and consoling the persecuted Hugonots. In snatching a victim from the uplifted arm of the fanatic De Vilette, De Sorvell received a wound in his own bosom, received it, oh God! in the sight of Rosalie. That moment gave birth to madness: and when, after a long, long oblivion to her woes, the wretched Rosalie recovered her reason, she found herself transformed into the sister Pasiphae of St. Dominick! but I pain thy kind heart."

"Nay, in sweet pity, continue," said the weeping novice.

"Alas! I have only to add, that my brother's death speedily followed my recovery, and that De Sorvell still lives, but oh! lives not for me!" The nun then, after a long pause, added: "And thinkest thou I will not make an effort to save thee from that fate that impends o'er thee? Indeed I will. After an absence of twenty years from the world, it contains but one being whom I can call friend. You once saw her at the parlour grate, when she came from Paris to visit me, at a time when I was on the point of dissolution."

"I do remember well," said Imogen, "the lady de Rosemont, to whom, at your desire, I carried a rich casket,

and who rewarded my trouble by such grateful commendation as pleased my childish vanity."

"The same; the amiable sister of the lover of Rosalie de Vilette. To her I will commend thee, and she, for my sake, and when I shall be no more, will protect thee. But hark! the bell tolls twelve: retire thee now to rest, and by to-morrow I shall have fixed on some plan for thee to pursue."

Imogen, who wept tears of joy, loaded the canoness with her affectionate and grateful caresses, embraced her knees, and kissed her hands a thousand times, while she earnestly entreated to be allowed to sit up with her till she should herself be inclined to retire to rest; but the canoness said she had some papers to arrange, and that it was never her custom to go to rest till some hours after midnight. Imogen, fearing to be intrusive, threw herself on the mattress; and, wearied by her long walk and her various emotions, soon fell into a soft and sweet repose.

The dawn was just glancing through the casement, and the bell tolling for matins, when Imogen from dreams of ideal bliss awakened, and beheld the canoness still-seated at the table: her arm supported her head, and her lamp burning dimly before her. The novice arose, and tenderly hinted her suggestions that she had not taken any repose; when, looking beneath the black veil that shaded her face, she was shocked to behold the visible change which had taken place in it since the preceding night. The hollow eyes of the nun were inflamed and red with weeping; the snowy whiteness of her complexion was changed to a deadly sallow, and her voice was hollow and inarticulate. After swallowing a draught prescribed by the physician of the convent, she appeared more composed, read over with great earnestness a letter that lay on the table, then folded and directed it to the chevalier de Sorvell. As she wrote the name, Imogen, who looked over her shoulder, saw the tears efface the letters almost as fast as they were written. The canoness then took up another letter, and presented it to Imogen to read: it was addressed to *madame de Rosemont*, and almost wholly related to Imogen, who was mentioned in a manner that called a blush into her cheek as she pe-

ruled the commendations of one whose esteem she so dearly prized; but the concluding lines paled that blush, and the tears of mourning friendship succeeded to the glow of self-satisfaction as she read the following passage:

"Friend of my life, farewell! That life, which your friendship alone rendered worthy of supporting, hastens with rapid flight to its last sad hour. My existence for these last two years has been a miracle to all, to myself a burthen. A protracted being has been the expiation of my sins; and death, like a welcome, long-expected friend, lures me to those joys life denied me. When you will receive this, I shall probably be no more. The dim eye, whose weak and imperfect vision scarce views these characters I trace: the trembling and skeleton hand that with difficulty guides my pen; and those confused and incoherent thoughts that rather confound than dictate the heart's still glowing wishes; all sadly coincide with those internal principles of decay which have long been stealing me to the grave. The young novice will give thee a small packet, to be delivered to thy brother: it contains his picture, and the letter he addressed some fifteen years ago to the minor canonesse of St. Dominick: it contains also a few lines, not from the fond Rosalie de Vilette, but the dying Pasiphaë. Yet, if over these few lines some faint beam of love's decaying fire sheds its lingering glow, and the woman's treacherous heart betrays its weakness even in the hour of awful dissolution, oh! let them not meet his eye, lest he, who towers above mortality, perceive how distant he has left me in virtue's steep ascent! Yet I *had a mind* that would have gone goal for goal with his, but that my heart lacked strength: but now all is over, and death will soon accomplish what reason and philosophy could not; for De Sorvell will cease to be beloved when Rosalie shall cease to live. Once more, farewell for ever!"

"For ever!" faintly articulated Imogen, concealing her face in her veil; then throwing her arms round the nun, sobbed aloud upon her bosom.

"My dear child," said the canonesse in great emotion, but too weak to weep, "this is too much! Spare me, spare thyself, nor let us by vain regrets occupy the pre-

cious time which should be devoted to saving thee from that fate which at thy age consigned me to misery! And trust me, sweet maid, that after a long, long exclusion from the happiness of serving a fellow-creature, the idea of snatching you from—oh wretchedness supreme! a living death, will shed a cheering ray upon my life's sad close; and, like a smiling cherub, hover round my heart till its last vital pulse shall cease to play, then mingle with the joys of opening heaven!

"Nay, hear me out, while I have strength to speak. The mode of thy escape alone perplexes me with obstacles. To-day I shall see a person, on whom I think I may confide, and whose services I have a right to claim: meantime return thou to the chateau De Montmorell, and obtain permission to come to-morrow evening to the convent at the hour of vespers. I know thou hast long been the instrument of our superior's sanctimonious avarice, who thinks by thy means to secure some rich donations to the convent from thy patroness, therefore is she impatient for thy return; and the lady Magdelaine, who has long trembled for her own salvation through thy apostacy, will be as anxious to entomb thee here as the abbess. You must escape their vigilance, and not depend on their generosity for your emancipation; for these women, who possess zeal without truth, and faith without virtue, will make it a merit in the eye of Heaven to force thee into that mode of thinking which, professing themselves from prejudice and fear, not conviction, empowers them to shut or open the gates of heaven as their own bigoted wills decree. Oh! they know not, they feel not, that the bond of true religion, like Heaven's own goodness, should be unlimitable, and enclose within its circle all mankind. Religion is to them a little code of local ceremonies, drawn up by human invention of the lowest order, of useless mysteries and childish bugbears, set to puzzle, not to convince; made to terrify, not to instruct. But thou, with whom religion is but a better name for happiness and virtue, mayest thou escape that bondage with which the zeal of false devotion would fetter all thy blooming virtues! Yet think not that thou wilt leave all bigotry behind thee when thou fliest from a convent.

Oh no! it is a hardy plant, and thrives in every soil, save in that where true religion only flourishes. 'Tis not beneath the cowl and scapular alone self-wrapt, illiberal prejudice veils its deformity : it finds protection in every sect ; for each believes itself alone the true, seizes with sacrilegious hand the apostolic key of paradise, and flings beyond salvation all who can't believe the dogmas it holds out."

The nun then, after a moment's pause, continued : " Lest my fading recollection should totally desert me, I will make what little arrangement I can at the present moment." Then taking out her own picture from the case Imogen had seen the night before, she placed in it the note directed to the chevalier De Sorvell, and fixed her eyes on his portrait for a considerable time, till her hand trembled so she could scarcely hold it. In a hurried manner she attempted to close the case, but finding the effort too much, she exclaimed : " It will not be !" and put it into Imogen's hands, who fastened it. " Conceal it carefully," said the nun, turning away her head, " and give it with that letter to the lady De Rosemont."

Imogen put them both in her bosom. " This ring," said the nun, after a long pause, in which she seemed to struggle for composure, taking a rich diamond from a casket, " was given me by a dying mother." Then kissing it and bathing it with her tears, she placed it on Imogen's finger. " Wear it," said she, " for the sake of her unfortunate daughter : and here is a small purse of gold ; thou wilt need it, my poor little wanderer ; nor wilt thou refuse it from one whose wish to serve thee is indeed great, but that her will lacks means." Imogen looked at the ring, then at the purse, then in the face of the canoness ; and, falling at her feet, folded her hands in hers, pressed them to her lips, and dewed them with her tears, in all that vivacity of motion and gesture the child of nature only possesses. " An honest heart has no feeling so strong as gratitude, and a liberal one none so strong as the delicacy with which it receives it." What a beautiful illustration of this just and elegant maxim was the canoness and the novice at that moment ! The countenance of Imogen, as her face was raised to-

wards the nun, beamed with all the energy of her grateful feelings; in the tender but half-averted glance of Pasiphaë was registered the meek delicacy with which it was received, not refusing, yet denying a claim to it.

"I have done nothing," said the canoness, raising the novice, "but what you can repay a thousand fold by conducting yourself with prudence, and by restraining that romantic turn of mind which is so great an enemy to the circumspection you should observe." The canoness then requested her to return to the chateau, lest their conference should awaken suspicion; and Imogen had only time to embrace her when some of the nuns entered, and after (in the usual common-place terms of regret) expressing their surprise at the alteration so visible in the appearance of the sister Pasiphaë, they took Imogen with them to assist at matins, who immediately after the service returned home.

CHAP. X.

I am fresh of spirit, and resolved
To meet all peril very constantly.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE day which intervened between that on which she had parted from the canoness and that on which they were finally to determine on the mode of her escape, was passed by Imogen in all that restless agitation of a mind labouring under the ever-torturing feelings of suspense; a species of suffering of all others the least supportable to such a mind as Imogen's, which, sanguine and impatient, scarcely conceived a project that fancy did not overleap probability to realize.

The lady Magdelaine, who possessed nothing of genius but its variability, was constantly altering, or, as she termed it, improving, some passage of her work, which caprice rather than judgment disapproved; and Imogen was detained to a later hour than usual on the evening when for the last time she was to visit the convent of St.

Dominick, and by that visit save herself from becoming its inhabitant for life.

Full of all those fears natural to her situation, she dared not ask permission to attend the convent vespers, lest suspicion should awaken at the request; for the sun had set some time before she had left the study of lady Magdelaine.

While in doubtful anxiety she stood at the casement of her apartment, and cast a longing look towards the convent's spires, Theodore, the young page, led out a mule from the postern gate beneath. "Theodore," said Imogen softly, "whither goest thou?" The page started, turned round, and replied: "To our bishop's castle, mademoiselle, with this packet from father Anselm, which is to be delivered before the morning's dawn."

"And if thy path lies near the convent of St. Dominick, wilt thou give me thy protection to its gates?"

"Will I! Oh! though it did not, how gladly would I go out of my way for the happiness of attending you!"

"Tarry then a moment," said Imogen, wrapping a large cloak round her, and creeping down softly to the postern gate, where Theodore received her. The summit of the loftiest mountain scarcely blushed to the departing radiance of the sun; over the spires of the convent the evening planet flung its steady light, while to the upturned gaze of Imogen and her young companion, on the deep blue of the atmosphere, countless suns, surrounded by their attendant worlds, gradually appeared.

"What a heavenly night!" said the page, throwing the bridle over the mule's neck, who followed him as he walked by Imogen's side.

"Heavenly indeed!" said Imogen; and they continued to walk on in silence.

"When we consider," said Imogen, after a pause, "that each of those beautiful lights, which now appear and disappear to the eye, is a sun, and the centre of a system of worlds, we become lost, overwhelmed by the idea of His omnipotence who created them, and wonder with the royal psalmist, 'Lord, what is man, or the son of man, that thou so regardest him!'"

"When you speak to me," said the page, "of the

wondrous works of nature, you appear to me yourself at once the most beautiful, the most interesting! Oh mademoiselle! when I hear you speak thus, and when I look at you, so young, so fair—!"

"Is that the convent bell?" interrupted Imogen, confused, and for the first time sensible of the impropriety she had committed in stealing from the chateau, unknown to its lady, at such an hour, and with such a guide. "The urgency of the circumstance only can excuse it," said Imogen, determined to proceed in silence.

"There is certainly some charm in the instruction you convey," continued the page; "for while the little astronomy and mathematics the father Philip had the goodness to teach me is all forgotten as fast as learnt, not a word, not a sentence, you ever uttered, but I could repeat better than my prayers; and I have often thought, mademoiselle, that if all teachers were like you, the world would benefit by it more than by all the colleges of jesuits in the world. What a difference between the hoarse accents of a toothless mumbling friar, and a voice like yours, flowing through teeth so white and lips so beautiful!"

"There is more gallantry than truth or justice in your remark," said Imogen coldly; "but I prithee let us quicken our pace, or I shall miss vespers."

"Is it true, mademoiselle, that you are indeed to enter on your profession Sunday next?"

"It is so intended, I believe," said Imogen.

"Gracious God!" exclaimed the page, with a profound sigh, and continuing to walk on in silence. They had now come within sight of the gates of St. Dominick, when Imogen suddenly stopt. "Hark!" said she, "how sweet that strain breathes on the stillness of the night!"

"It must be the nuns chaunting the evening service," said the page.

"Surely," said Imogen, "this is something more than ordinary."

They had now reached an eminence which commanded a perfect view of the convent grounds, and Imogen and her companion paused to observe the effect produced by approaching torch-light, as it flushed a red tint

on the gloomy foliage of the pines and cypress that shaded the cloistral walks; while a long range of awful arches chequered with their extended shadows the broad mass of light the illumination within the body of the church flung from the stained sashes of the lofty spiral windows. The next moment a procession of friars appeared, walking two by two, and carrying lighted tapers; then followed the exorcist, the cross-bearer, and the officiating priest, heading four brothers of the order of St. Dominick, bearing on their shoulders a bier covered with a pall, which, flowing back from their shoulders, fell to the ground. Supported by two of her nuns appeared the abbess of St. Dominick as chief mourner; and the whole body of the sisterhood closed up the procession, which proceeded from the convent gate along the cloisters. The friars sung the *Miserere* till they approached the church; when their deep tones fading into a mournful cadence, the nuns began the *requiem* until they were all received within the body of the church, where their soft and sweet choral strain was lost amidst the organ's loud and solemn swell; and the whole impressive scene was again wrapt in the gloom of obscurity.

"How awful!" said the page; "'tis one of the pious sisterhood going to her last home!"

Imogen in silence and with rapidity descended the eminence; then, waving her hand, and faintly uttering her thanks to Theodore, she entered the gates of the cemetery, which lay open, and glided into the church. The solemn office for the dead was just begun; and the body, placed in the centre of the aisle, was surrounded by tapers.

Imogen, though scarcely able to move, crept behind the pillars, and, entering the choir, mingled with the nuns. Not daring to make an enquiry, and full of the prophetic fears of anxious friendship, she threw herself on her knees beside the lay sister who had attended the canoness. "So," said the sister in a whispering voice, "you are come too late; it is all over with your friend."

"Merciful God!" exclaimed Imogen faintly, "then it is as I suspected."

"Yes," said the sister; "you are doubtless disappoint-

ed, for I suppose you expected something by her death; but though I had a right to whatever she might have left (for the saints are witness to the trouble I have had with her) I came off no better than yourself. With all the canoness's wondrous sense, which was perpetually taking others to pieces, every trumped-up story of distress could impose on her."

To this selfish and unfeeling harangue Imogen listened in tears and in silence; then, after a long pause, in a voice scarcely articulate, she demanded when the canoness died? "In something less than three hours after you left her," returned the sister: "when I went into her cell after matins, I found her lying on the ground in a swoon; but she only recovered from one fainting fit to fall into another. We carried her into the chapel to receive extreme unction, and she died in our arms, almost without benefit of the clergy, Christ preserve us! for she took no notice of what was going forward: she was indeed speechless from the time you left her."

Here the office for the dead being finished, mass was celebrated; and the officiating priest having flung incense over the body, and sprinkled it with holy water, the procession proceeded to the chancel, where a grave was opened to receive all that remained of the mortality of the unfortunate Rosalie de Vilette.

As soon as the body was interred, the pious crowd retired; and Imogen, who leaned behind a pillar for support, soon found herself alone, and seating herself by the grave of the canoness, wept the death of the only friend Providence had raised to cheer her hapless destiny! Yet were her emotions, though mournful, not ungracious: it was a melancholy indulgence of that luxury of woe so profoundly to be felt by the heart of sensibility, so impossible to define. To the tender regret of friendship succeeded a train of considerations more immediately connected with self-interest. Imogen now found herself without a friend on earth, and her "tender buds of hope" blasted in the very moment she believed the genial influence of friendship was about to rear them to maturity. She had not the faintest suspicion of the person to whose care she believed the canoness meant to consign her, and

who was to have conducted her in safety to the lady de Rosemont; and how, helpless and unprotected as she was, she should find a mode to escape the vigilance of lady Magdelaine before three days could elapse, or travel alone through that part of the province where civil war raged with the most boundless fury, was a question unanswerable.

The deep toll of the midnight bell first awoke her attention from the train of thought involved in it, to a sense her situation. Seated by the newly-made grave of the departed nun, on a fragment of a broken tomb-stone, with no other light than what the dying lamps in the distant aisles afforded, Imogen shuddered at the awful gloom that surrounded her: she arose and took a taper that burnt before the shrine of St. Dominick, and held it up; but its faint blue flame served but to make the darkness of the church more visible. Imogen, though reared in a convent, possessed not the shadow of superstition; but "*even Night is no logician*," and the imagination of the novice, but too much alive to the impression of existing circumstances, opposed those arguments her mind suggested to her fears, and for a moment left her a prey to those vague horrors which ignorance and error are supposed only to cherish. But their influence was but momentary; she smiled away her apprehensions, and advanced towards a door which opened into the cloisters, determined to proceed to the dormitory, and take up her night's lodging in the cell of the lay sister who attended the canoness, and of whom she had yet much to ask relative to her deceased friend.

She had scarcely proceeded a few steps when, stumbling over some loose flags, she slightly hurt her foot. To prevent the return of a similar accident, she took down a lamp that hung from a pillar, and holding it low, as its light flashed on the tessellated pavement, she observed it chequered by the extended shadow of what she supposed an image. Instinctively raising her eyes, she beheld a tall figure leaning on the pedestal of a monument: Imogen started, believed it still to be a statue, and raised her lamp: the figure glided away!

Imogen clung to a pillar for support; a chill faintness seized her: she would have sunk to the earth, but that an encircling arm withheld her.

"Fear not, lady," said a voice low and mournful; "the spirit of the departed saint thou mournest, like thy ministering angel, guards the sacred vigils of weeping-friendship, and —"

Imogen heard no more; the exaggerated fears of imagination were almost wound up to frenzy; and, after a temporary insensibility to her situation, she found herself seated at the base of the monument where the figure had leaned, and the father Philip supporting her in his arms, while his lanthorn burnt by her side.

"Merciful God! was it you, father?" said she: "could fear so have deceived me, that I did not know your voice or person? and yet, methought, as you leaned against this pedestal, your figure appeared tall beyond ordinary height."

"I lean against a pedestal? holy mother! why thou hast had a vision, daughter," said the friar smiling; whose round, plump stature must have suffered a strange metamorphose, to have answered Imogen's description.

"Was it not you, father, who caught me as I sunk to the earth?"

"Marry no; I found thee seated here pale and lifeless, as I was returning to my convent, after shriving the sister Agnes, who is fast following the canoness."

"And saw you no one?" demanded Imogen.

"None but thee," said the father; "and truly thou didst startle me, and not a little, daughter."

Imogen then related the circumstance of her having loitered at the grave of her departed friend, and of the figure that met her eye and addressed her.

The father was too superstitious not to express some emotion at the detail: until the probability suggested itself, that either the solemnity and gloom of the place, in conjunction with Imogen's fears, had conjured up the phantom; or that some person, among the few of the neighbouring peasantry who were present at the funeral obsequies, had loitered behind, quieted the friar's suspicions of a supernatural intruder; and holding up his lan-

thorn, and perceiving the door still open by which the peasantry usually entered, he exclaimed: " 'Tis as I suspected; some pious hind was keeping his vigil at the shrine of his patron saint, and your spectral appearance scared him from his devotion."

Imogen was in no temper of mind to argue the point, however she might differ in opinion from the friar: who, drawing her arm through his own, conducted her to the convent, where she joined a few of the nuns, who were sitting up with a sick sister; and while the curious legend, holy fable, or wondrous tale, went round with ceaseless garrulity, the novice remained silent and thoughtful, wholly occupied with those various interesting and melancholy reflections which the death of the canoness and her own situation had awakened: nor was the mysterious stranger forgotten; the imagination of Imogen was too romantic, not to give the occurrence all the high colouring of the marvellous; and the voice and address of the incognito was of too singular and superior a nature, to induce her to coincide with father Philip. "It is all a mystery," mentally exclaimed Imogen, "and certainly a mystery connected with the death of the canoness."

While she was thus occupied, the nuns turned the conversation on the death of the canoness: and the novice learned that a dispensation from the pope, enabling the sister Pasiphae to remove from the convent for the recovery of her health, had been brought by two strangers of noble appearance, who seemed much afflicted at the tidings of her death, and who immediately rode away, without stopping to take the refreshments prepared for them in the refectory.

Imogen was now certain that one of those strangers was the person who addressed her; yet willing to avoid the tiresome questions and wondering curiosity of the nuns, she forbore making any mention of her adventure; and the next morning reached the chateau before her absence during the night had been noticed, while the nuns took leave of her as one from whom, in a day or two, they should part no more.

When a strong mind is thrown wholly on itself, it be-

comes fertile in resources. "I must now," said Imogen, "depend on myself alone." This reflection gave her an ostensibility in her own estimation, she could not feel while depending on the exertions of the canoness. She had money, more than she believed she should ever have occasion for; and she had a letter to secure her a reception with madame de Rosemont; and now her first and favourite plan of eloping in the disguise of a minstrel again recurred to her mind, as the only one she could adopt. Yet even to effect this, it was requisite to have some assistance; and there was but one person to whom she could apply: that person was Theodore the page.

The modesty of her nature, and some degree of pride incident to her character, had prevented her hitherto from noticing the page by the least familiarity: she thought their situations assimilated too closely to admit of the shadow of freedom on her part; and the occasional modest gallantries of the young page rendered her still more diffident of admitting any on his. Their only intercourse, for two years that they had been beneath the same roof together, had been a repeated offer of little services, or oblique encomiums on his side, and of grateful refusals or modest rejections on hers. A sense of the discovery she was about to make, and the services she was about to demand, overwhelmed her with confusion, as she entered the apartment where Theodore, who had read all the romances of the age, sat absorbed in a book. On Imogen's entrance he flung it down, and rose respectfully. "I fear," said Imogen, "I have interrupted your studies." "'Tis true, mademoiselle, you have; but how much more delightful is such interruption, than any pursuit it could interfere with!"

"Perhaps," said Imogen, "thou wert quarrelling with thy author, and glad of an opportunity to fling him aside."

"Pardon me, I was much interested in the story: 'tis of a brave and noble knight, who rescued by his single arm a beautiful and amiable lady from the power of two guardians, who would have forced her into a convent, to possess themselves of her fortune. Oh how happy are such knights!"

"Dost thou think so, Theodore? and wouldst thou too volunteer in the service of the suffering and oppressed, did an opportunity occur?"

"Would I? would I? oh God! but you do not, will not, know my heart."

"I think I do, Theodore; for I believe it noble, generous, and benevolent; else would I not repose that confidence in thee I am now on the point of doing."

"A confidence! and in me, holy Mother! you cannot mean it?"

"Not if you refuse to receive it, Theodore."

"I refuse! I swear by all I hold dear to consecrate my life to your service."

"Nay, my kind friend, I demand no protestations." She then mentioned her determination of avoiding a mode of life, to which she had objections, which neither her reason nor conscience could get over; her expectation of an asylum with madame de Rosemont; with every other circumstance relative to the intention she had formed.

Theodore listened to her in amazement too great for utterance. "What, mademoiselle, you who have been always looked up to as a saint; you who have been always intended for a nun! 'tis most strange, and yet most natural: besides, whatever you think best must be so; and oh, were you to remain here, how delighted should I be at your determination! and when you leave the chateau, who will care to remain in it? Oh, did you but know how your idea cheered its solitude, how often the sight of you passing through the antichamber has revived my spirits for a whole day! When I looked on you as a sacred being consecrated to God, I believed it almost a sin to think of you, but as one does of their patron saint: and then, holy Mother! what pains did I take to stifle even—But your pardon, mademoiselle, I would not offend you for the world.—You were speaking of your escape from the chateau. I do believe the lady Magdelaine has it much at heart to make you a nun, whether your vocation lies that way or no; and it will not be easy to get clear of her vigilance: where does the lady Rosemont reside?"

Imogen drew from her bosom the letter addressed to

madame de Rosemont. Theodore, reading in the superscription that her chateau lay on the skirts of Picardy, and within three leagues of the city of Soissons, suddenly exclaimed: "Nothing can be more apropos. You must know, mademoiselle, there lives about two leagues from the chateau, a widow and two sons, who deal largely in the frieze cloths for which this province is so famous; their chief market is at Soissons, and since this part of the country has been so disturbed, they carry their merchandize by water, and coast along the Aisne. Of a fine evening you could almost see the smoke of their chimney across the river from your window: they are plain, simple, and credulous, and differ in no respect from the peasantry, except in being somewhat more opulent. You know, mademoiselle, I have some skill in pharmacy, having culled simples and attended the laboratory of the Cistercian brothers at St. Menhoulm, until recommended to the lady Magdelaine by father Anselm. The poor people think me skilful; and having had the good fortune to cure one of the widow's sons of a disorder in his leg, they fancy themselves beholden to serve me to the utmost extent of their power. Sunday is the day appointed for you to enter your holy profession; Saturday is the market of Soissons; these good people will set out with their merchandize early on Friday morning: I will recommend you to their protection as a young relation of my own, going into the service of a lady in Picardy; when you are once at Soissons, they will easily find a mode of conveyance for you to the chateau at Rosemont."

The sanguine Imogen eagerly caught at this project, and thanked Theodore with tears and smiles of gratitude. "But art thou sure, my kind friend," said she, that these people will afford me the protection you suppose? and how will you be able to see them between this and to-morrow morning, when you say they set out on their journey?"

"Oh! easily, mademoiselle: I shall paddle the little pleasure boat across the Aisne, instead of going the high road; by which means I shall reach their cottage in less than an hour and a half, and shall be back by the

time my lady goes to supper: mean while pack up whatever you think necessary to take with you; and three hours after midnight, when the moon will rise, the splashing of the oars beneath your window will be the signal of departure."

"Suppose," said Imogen, after a moment's pause, and in some confusion, "I were to disguise myself as a minstrel; might not a man's garb be some protection?"

"Doubtless, mademoiselle: neither your sex, face, or form, are much calculated to insure you safety in an adventure such as you are now on the point of entering; and a minstrel's garb is a passport every where: yet should you assume it, I see no necessity for your doing so until you arrive at Soissons. The most dangerous part of your journey will be the three leagues between Soissons and De Rosemont; the war rages in Picardy; the king has invested Laon; and the two armies are scattered in every direction."

"Is the minstrel's robe still lying in his apartment?" asked Imogen, colouring.

"It is, mademoiselle: I will leave it in your room with a doublet and hose of my own; we are, I think, much of a size; the minstrel was of a lofty stature."

"He was so," said Imogen, sighing.

"Do you think you will meet this minstrel, mademoiselle," said the page with a penetrating smile, "when you enter the world?"

"Good heavens! no, why should you think so?"

"May I entreat your pardon? In truth I know not why I think so; but I am certain that were it so, the minstrel would not regret the circumstance; yet his never returning here, with such inducements,—except indeed he—"

"Theodore," interrupted Imogen, "it were well we now parted, our long conference may else excite suspicion."

"True, mademoiselle: it is selfish in me to wish to prolong my own happiness, at the expence of endangering yours; but a conversation with you is so——Well, I am gone, mademoiselle; if you loiter here about nine

o'clock this evening, I shall have returned from the cottage of dame Margueretta, and will meet you here."

Theodore then set out on his little friendly expedition; and Imogen attended lady Magdelaine, as she believed and hoped, for the last time, in her study.

At the hour Theodore had appointed, Imogen found him in the antichamber; he had only time to tell her that he had arranged every thing with the dame Margueretta, when the lady Magdelaine's bell summoned him to the supper-room, where Imogen also adjourned, and took her seat as usual at the table.

What a heart throbbed in her bosom, during the most tedious supper she had ever sat down to! The friar, who was doing all possible justice to a very fine capon, was silently busy till the cloth was removed: when he amply made up for his taciturnity, by expatiating on the art of cookery, its rise, progress, and decline among the ancients, and its revival in the present day; inveighing against the sin of intemperance, and on the benefit resulting from spare diet; repeating some lines of Horace, descriptive of

'A noble pair of brothers, who
On nightingales of monstrous purchase din'd;'

with an appropriate eulogium on the Spartan brown-bread and black broth; and exclaiming against the luxuries of the table with the abstemious vehemence of an Indian bramin, after having feasted with the voluptuous delicacy of an Apicius. At last, having finished a bottle of *vin de pays*, he arose to retire; the lady Magdelaine arose at the same time.

The heart, when placed in a new situation, betrays emotions of which it believed itself incapable, until called into existence by the pressure of circumstances hitherto inexperienced. Imogen received the father's benediction with an emotion that almost tempted her to press the hand that waved over her bending head; and when she wished the lady Magdelaine good-night, she did it in a tone so full of tenderness, that the lady Magdelaine seemed to catch the infection of kindness, and, instead of her

usual formal salute, returned, "God bless you, child!" Never had her sharpest severity gone so closely to the heart of Imogen. "It is probable," said Imogen, as she looked after them as they proceeded by different ways to their respective apartments, "I shall never see you more." In that reflection all their former unkindness was forgotten; Imogen could recollect nothing but the pains the friar had taken with her in her studies, and the condescension with which lady Magdelaine had lately asked her opinion upon several occasions. Imogen returned to her chamber, and found the minstrel's robe, with part of the page's dress, on her bed: these she packed up with a small parcel of linen; then, seating herself at the casement, passed the remainder of the night, so pregnant with event, in a variety of conflicting and opposite reflections. The hope of emancipation from impending evils; the fears natural in an attempt so hazardous to a mind equally ignorant of enterprize and vicissitude; the sanguine expectation of success, and the dread of failure; all contributed to agitate the mind of Imogen, and at intervals nearly overthrew every intention, and staggered every resolve. At last the clock struck three, the moon arose from behind the spires of Saint Dominick, and Imogen heard the splashing of the oar beneath her casement: she arose, wrapt a large cloak round her, took her little parcel in one hand, a small lute in the other, as a substitute for a harp in her personification of the minstrel; and proceeded with a noiseless step and beating heart to the gallery, which opened by a glass door on the terrace, where Theodore met her. He took her parcel and lute; and drawing her arm through his, they proceeded in silence till they descended a flight of marble steps, at the foot of which the boat was moored. Theodore placed his trembling charge in it; and seating himself opposite to her, plied the oar, which sparkled with the brilliant drops of the moon-light wave. As they glided from the shore, the dark scenery of the chateau and the forest de Montmorell assumed an awful and impressive aspect. The thoughts of Imogen were wholly absorbed in their contemplation: those local attachments which a warm and affectionate heart will form even for

inanimate objects, to which it has been long habituated, rushed on her mind; and in the moment of her parting from them for ever, assumed an interest her heart before had never confest. Every spot, as it receded from her gaze, recollection consecrated to some novel sensation, some new-born idea, some developed thought; and the soft regret which attends a final separation from things grateful from habit, but in themselves inconsequential, mingled with the joyous emotion of liberty regained, and hopes almost ratified, which thrilled with ardent pulsation on every fibre of her heart. Then apostrophizing the sombre pile on which her gaze was fastened, she mentally exclaimed, "Alas! how many weary hours and restless days have I passed within the confines of thy gloomy walls! There my heart has vainly throbb'd, to disclose the lively emotions it cherished; there have my eyes vainly cast round their hopeless glance, nor met the look of sympathy they sought; there reflection shed her light on my mind only to make me conscious of the wretchedness of my destiny, and every new-born thought awakened but to slumber!" Then casting her eyes towards a casement brilliantly illuminated with the moon-beams, she recollected that it was there she last beheld the minstrel; that it was there she had received those vows, which in her young heart awakened a bliss beyond all the joys she believed the scale of human felicity comprised! Even the recollection of that sweet, though illusive moment, was 'a joy past joy;' "and though," said Imogen, "experience has taught me it was but a rapturous dream, I would not part with the emotions the remembrance of that dream excites, for all the sober contentment and unalloyed satisfaction that I may yet, that I have hitherto enjoyed. Alas! that the happiest moment of life should have been the most deceitful!" Her half-articulated exclamation was accompanied by tears which coursed each other down her cheek.

"Ah, mademoiselle!" said the page, who had long and silently observed the varying emotions of her expressive and eloquent countenance, "it is for those only to weep whom you have left behind. 'Tis certain I always knew you were to leave us some time or other:

but still you would have remained in the neighbourhood; and on a festival day, when I attended the church of St. Dominick, I should hear your sweet voice, and know I was under the same roof with you: but now, now you are free, and it is no sin to think of you.—But pardon me, I would not for the world say any thing to offend you: I always believed you were intended for something great; I shall never forget the horoscope cast for you by the old astrologer, the last day he visited the chateau. Yet I once read in a romance, of a page who fell in love with the very lady he served: it was indeed audacious, but then, there is no dictating to the heart; do you think there is, mademoiselle?"

"I should hope so, Theodore," said Imogen with a sigh; "else wherefore was reason bestowed on us? The best heart is liable to become the sport of its own impulse: and even though its propensities *individually* considered may be consonant to virtue; yet *relatively* they may be inimical to prudence, justice, and the happiness of others, as well as our own."

"'Tis very true, mademoiselle; you always speak, think, and look, like an angel! We should not attach ourselves to an object we can never possess: not that it is wrong to love what is most worthy of being loved; oh no! but to encourage an inclination detrimental to our peace, without even a *hope* of gratifying it, is at once sinful and childish: is it not so, mademoiselle?"

"I fear so, Theodore," sighed Imogen; and they both remained silent till the boat put into a little harbour, that almost bathed the walls of dame Marguerette's cottage. The dawn was already breaking in the east, a faint tinge of yellow gleamed on the horizon, and the morning planet still survived the lesser lights of the firmament; while, opposed to the glowing flush of strengthening day, the moon appeared but as a luminous vapour. Moored to the bank lay a package-boat; and Theodore, steering clear of it, anchored his little bark to the stump of a decaying willow, whose drooping boughs flung their shade across it; then jumped on the bank, and rapped at the cottage door. A light soon appeared in the casement, and the next moment he was admitted: when he returned

to Imogen he was accompanied by a middle-aged woman, habited in the peasant dress of the country, and who welcomed her in a patois dialect so broad and unintelligible, that Imogen only understood her courteous reception by the air of native kindness which accompanied it. She conducted her young and timid protégée to a small room, where two comely youths were at breakfast. Imogen and the page gratefully partook of the rural fare, pressed on them by their hosts with all the eagerness of unpolished hospitality. The meal being finished, the two young men and their mother went out to the boat; and as Imogen observed them stowing in the last parcel of their frieze merchandize, she turned to Theodore, and having thanked him in a voice scarcely articulate from emotion, she added: "And now, my kind friend, it would ease my heart of its fears on your account, lest your absence should be discovered, did I see you row back towards the chateau, whose turrets the morning light render discernible even at this distance."

"Ah!" said the page, brushing a tear from his cheek, "I shall be there too soon."

"How thy kindness affects me!" said Imogen, applying her handkerchief to her eyes; "yet how I envy thee thy feelings! for dear to a heart like thine must be the consciousness of a benevolent action performed for another at the risk of injuring ourselves. Pure disinterested humanity! this is thy blessed attribute; and while the heart of Imogen shall throb with life, the generosity of Theodore shall live among its most grateful recollections."

"Oh heavens, how you overpower me! To succour the oppressed is an impulse of the heart, not an effort of the mind; it is a gratification, not a duty. I remember it was thus you spoke, when I would have thanked you for clearing my character to lady Magdelaine, after the envious Bernardine had so grossly aspersed it. I remember too, when I was on the point of being discharged, and you pleaded for me with tears, and offered me all the money you had to send my mother, for that Bernardine had deprived me of, and—"

"Nay, no more, I entreat no more;" interrupted Imo-

gen, and at that moment the woman entered to tell her all was ready for their departure.

Imogen presented her hand to Theodore: he led her out in silence; placed her in the boat, fixed her parcel and lute beside her, and held the hand she presented him for more than a minute to his lips, and then, unable even to utter an adieu, leapt on shore. The little bark glided swiftly away. Theodore, with folded arms and watery eyes, pursued it with his gaze.

Imogen kissed the end of her veil, and waved it in the air. Theodore returned the salute with his hat; and the next moment the serpentine course of the river stole her from his view. The page then entered his little boat with a weary and desponding heart, and reached the *chateau de Montmorell* ere its inhabitants had awakened to the dull round of their accustomed avocations.

CHAP. XI.

One out of sorts with fortune.

SHAKESPEARE.

Io vado—

Fuggitiva Taminga—e chi sa dove
Puo guidarmi il destin?

METASTASIO.

SWIFTER than the course of the rapid stream over which she glided, flowed the thoughts of Imogen as she pursued her voyage along the delicious shores of the Aisne. "Some natural tears she dropt, but dried them soon;" and the timid apprehensions, the sombre doubts, that had agitated her mind, vanished before the cheering beams of hope. As the mists of twilight gradually disappeared to her eye before the rising refulgence of the sun, all "the melodies of morn" burst on her ear, all the awakened beauties of nature blushed on her view; and while the lowing of the herds, the wild tone of the huntsman's horn, or the warlike blast of the trumpet's shriller notes, died away among the echoes of the hills, the boat glided through a changeful scenery, over which the en-

thusiast fancy of the young Imogen roved with unsated delight. Mean time her female companion seemed lost in silent calculation of her expected profits, which appeared by her reckoning on her fingers: while the two boys alternately sung a hymn to the Virgin, or a ballad of Rollo; and sometimes raised their sparkling oars to point out a straggling party of the military, who held their outposts on the summit of a distant eminence, and who had come down to the skirts of an extensive orchard to regale themselves with the delicious fruit it afforded.

Imogen's fellow-travellers having provided themselves with refreshments, about noon they landed, and spread their simple repast beneath the shelter of a rock, whose high and overhanging points were shaded with pine and elder, amidst whose interwoven branches the vertical beams of the meridian sun played without incommoding the travellers. Over the hours of social enjoyment care holds no jurisdiction. The old woman ceased to calculate, and was loquaciously gay; while the young men, more alive to the beauties of a face a large hat (now thrown on one side) no longer concealed, collected the choicest wild flowers the spot afforded, and presented them as a tribute of homage to the charms of their lovely fellow-traveller: while the young heart of Imogen, ever ready to expand its affectionate powers to the least influence of kindness, entered with interest into the village politics and domestic tales of the dame and her sons, though with difficulty understood; and catching up their dialect, with all the most happy powers of imitation which she so pre-eminently possessed, repeated (as they continued their voyage) several legends, and sung some provincial ballads, which she accompanied on her lute.

That witchcraft which lurked in the manners of their fair companion stole insensibly on the hearts of the simple peasants; the evening unobserved fled on with hasty strides, and the last gleam of the setting sun illuminated the high tops of the forest of Folambray, which appeared, at the distance it was observed, like a dark cloud tinged with living gold, as the spires of Soissons rose on their

view. Within half a league of the city they landed at a little *cabaret*, where they were to put up for the night.

It was a matter of some debate with Imogen and her new friends, whether she would set off that evening to the chateau de Rosemont, with Robichon, the younger of the boys, on horseback, or wait till the following morning, and hire a guide at the cabaret; for Robichon would be under the necessity of attending the market with his mother by dawn the next day. Extreme impatience to arrive at the end of her journey, and her reluctance to trust herself to a strange guide, or remain longer at the cabaret, now thronged with rude and riotous people, who put up with their merchandize for the night, induced her to adopt the former plan, to which Theodore had strongly advised her; and though her host of the cabaret assured her the road to the chateau de Rosemont was neither dangerous nor frequented, yet she thought it advisable to adopt the disguise with which she had furnished herself, as more appropriate to her expedition than the light and singular habit of a novice of St. Dominick.

Having expressed her intention to her female protectress, who highly approved of it, while Robichon got the horse ready, Imogen exchanged her dress for that of a minstrel; while modesty trembled at the mandate necessity imposed, and blushed "celestial rosy red" in contemplating a transformation which was to secure the sensitive feelings of delicacy from a still greater violation.

As soon as she was dressed, she presented two pieces of gold to the dame Marguerette, influenced rather by the suggestion of her generosity than her prudence in the donation: for amidst the thanks with which the dame overwhelmed her lurked surprise, curiosity, and suspicion; and she now for the first time became importunate in her enquiries and hints, which Imogen to avoid seemed not to understand. Robichon now led a horse to the door, for the hire of which Imogen had paid. Imogen flung the string of her lute over her shoulder; and, being placed on horseback behind Robichon, she bid adieu to dame Marguerette and her eldest son, and struck off in a path which lay to the west of Soissons.

Although the sun had set some minutes before they left the door of the cabaret, a flood of crimson light bathed the horizon, reflected on every object a deep red tint, and gave to scenes of changeful variety, through which the travellers passed, that warm glow of colouring which so eminently characterizes the animated landscapes of Claude Lorraine, until the last sweet solemn hour of

" Grey-hooded even,
Like a sad votarist in palmer's weeds,
Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus's car ;"

and as the obscurity of twilight veiled in gradual oblivion those picturesque and varying objects which had interested her taste or given play to her imagination, Imogen's thoughts revolved wholly on herself, and the reception she would meet with from the lady de Rosemont; and a thousand timid fears insinuated themselves into a heart too anxious to please not to be doubtful of success, and which had sketched the reception of her new protectress under a thousand aspects that alternately animated her hopes or strengthened her apprehensions. "How much," thought Imogen, "will the good madame de Rosemont be shocked, when at the same moment she will receive her friend's letter and an account of her death! Surely the sense of affliction in ourselves can be scarcely more dreadful than that of awakening it in another. It is entering a family under very gloomy auspices, to be first known to it as the bearer of melancholy tidings."

"I hope, mademoiselle," said Robichon, as he jogged on with undeviating pace, "that you are not afraid."

"Afraid, good Robichon! of what?" said Imogen; who now first observed the loneliness of their path, which lay through a wild and desolate heath.

"Of what! nay I know not, mademoiselle; but one would as soon not travel at this dead hour of the night if one could help it. Somehow, although I defy the devil and all his works; I never care to go the length of myself when once the sun sets behind our mountains: albeit, our father Francisco gave me a charm against evil spirits; see, mademoiselle, here it is, enclosed in this little

reliquary, which was my great-grandfather's; 'tis but a little of the sand scraped off the golden cockle-shell of St. Michael, yet I warrant of marvellous great power."

"I fear no evil spirits," said Imogen, casting round a timid glance; "and Heaven, I trust, will protect us from mortal enemies."

"Now, I'll be sworn, mademoiselle, an' I would rather meet a troop of arquebusiers, with their short fusees, long rapiers, and murdering faces, than one single spirit. Holy St. Michael! what is that standing near the ruins of yonder watch-tower? The whole army of blessed martyrs take us into their care!"

"In good sooth," said Imogen, recovering from momentary horror, "thou frightenest me: I see nothing near the watch-tower but a withered tree. Come, banish thy fears, and I will tell thee a pleasant tale for thy amusement; 'tis the wondrous tragedy of the Green Lady and the Dwarf of the Hills."

"Do so, mademoiselle; it gladdens my very heart to hear a marvellous pleasant tale, and never did I hear a story of a dwarf that was not full of cunning device."

"Well, then, first tell me how far may we be from de Rosemont?"

"A league from the watch-tower, which in former times belonged to the seigneurie of de Rosemont. I know every step of the road as well as my beads. Before the troubles broke out in Picardy, we carried our merchandize into the neighbourhood of the chateau. But I prithee, demoiselle, let us have thy pleasant story."

"Well then, Robichon, mend thy pace, and thus we begin: It was about the reign of Louis the twelfth, —"

"He was a saint, mademoiselle, was he not?" said Robichon, crossing himself devoutly.

"Not by the calendar," said Imogen smiling; "but he was the father of his people. It was in his reign that an ancient castle stood at the foot of mount Cenis."

"My grand-dam has a story that begins just so," said Robichon; "only that, instead of mount Cenis, 'tis the Vauge mountains. But I cry you mercy; proceed, mademoiselle."

"This castle was the residence of a lady, who—Do you not hear the distant sound of horses' feet?"

"Methinks I do," said Robichon; "yet I see nothing. We are not very far from the forest of Folambray, of which there is a dreadful story of a white steed. The story runs thus: It was—"

"Merciful God!" said Imogen; "if the forest should be a shelter for banditti!"

"Lord help the lady! the whole kingdom is a shelter for them; for, go which way you will, you are sure of being murdered and plundered into the bargain."

At that moment, by the light of the corruscations which flashed in the atmosphere, Imogen perceived a band of horsemen descend from the opposite hill. She could scarcely articulate, "Fly, or we are lost!" while Robichon, equally intimidated, turned off the high road, and galloped with the utmost speed down a narrow alley, impenetrable from the gloom of the trees which shaded it. They had gone more than half a-league before Robichon checked his horse: then listening for a moment, and hearing no sound but the melancholy groans of the forest agitated by the gusts of rising wind, he exclaimed, breathlessly and still trembling, "Well, mademoiselle, I believe we have distanced them for this time; and by the length of way we have gone, I wot we cannot be far from the chateau." "But you seem to forget, Robichon," said the still agitated Imogen, "that, though we have gone a considerable distance, we have taken a road directly opposite to that which led to de Rosemont."

"*Ventre Dieu!* I never thought of that; but there are so many little zig-zag ways about these forests, which the peasants cut for themselves, that I doubt not this same path will lead to the chateau; and I am much mistaken if those are not its turrets rising to the left."

"We are certainly near a chateau," said Imogen, whose heart bounded at the conviction; "but whether it be the chateau de Rosemont—"

"It can be no other," said Robichon.

Less than a quarter of an hour's ride brought them before the portals of the chateau. It was a vast and frowning edifice, flanked on all sides by lofty round towers, and in-

volved in an air of melancholy gloom, which the solemnity and darkness of midnight heightened almost to desolation.

"Are you certain that this is the chateau de Rosemont?" demanded Imogen, while a chillness crept through her veins as she contemplated this great and sombre structure of feudal power.

"Morally certain," replied Robichon, alighting, and heartily weary of his journey, which his wishes led him to believe was now at an end.

"The family are retired to rest, I fear," said Imogen.

"We shall soon awaken them," said Robichon, taking hold of a horn that hung by a brass chain from the outer gate, and sounding a blast that seemed to shake the whole building, and was repeatedly reverberated among the surrounding hills. In a few minutes a light appeared in an upper casement of one of the towers, which was cautiously opened; and a man, holding out a lanthorn, demanded, "Who sounded at the horn?"

"A friend, who wants admittance," said Robichon.

"That is more easily asked than granted," returned the man.

"I pray you, good friend, inform us," said Imogen, "if this is the chateau de Rosemont?"

"Why, here are *two* friends instead of one," said the man, "who want admittance," holding down his lanthorn; "but what boots it to thee to know, young sir? These are no times to admit nightly wanderers. Thou hadst better not lose thy time parleying here, so good night!"

"We are no wanderers," said Imogen eagerly. "This youth is my guide, who returns when he sees me safely lodged within the gates of the chateau de Rosemont."

"Marry, then it will be long ere he returns; but what is thy business here?"

"To deliver a letter and packet of some consequence to the lady de Rosemont."

"O ho! a packet of consequence! well, tarry there a moment, and I will be with thee presently."

The casement was then closed, and the light retired.

It was near a quarter of an hour before the window was again opened. "The lady de Rosemont is retired to rest," said the same voice; "but hie thee to the postern-

gate to the left of this tower, and thou shalt obtain admittance."

"Thank heaven then!" said Imogen, "*this is the chateau de Rosemont.*"

"Ay, ay, I could not be mistaken," said Robichon, leading round the horse; and by the time he had lifted her off, the gate was unbarred, and a man appeared with a lanthorn. By his voice Imogen knew it was the same she had already spoken to.

Robichon gave her little parcel into the hands of the man; who, wrapped in a long dark cloak, scowled a penetrating glance at the two young strangers, and exclaimed in a surly tone to Robichon, "I have received no orders to admit you."

"Nay," said Robichon, "and though thou hadst it would matter nought, for I could not tarry if I would; so spare thy excuses, good master churl."

Imogen drew her purse from her pocket, put a gold-piece into Robichon's hand, and thanked him for his protection. Robichon would have spoken, but the man rudely pushed him out, and said, as he barred the gate, "By the mass, that fellow has as much jabber as an old woman."

He then proceeded, followed by Imogen, through a spacious court surrounded by a parapet wall, and entered a large folding gate, which he barred after him, as he had done the former. Imogen found herself in a large Gothic hall, at the further end of which an expiring fire sent forth a transitory flame. Her conductor (whom she supposed to be the porter), raked up the dying embers, and drew a stool for her to be seated. While he was thus employed she stole a timid glance at his countenance, whose natural expression of ferocity was only tempered by the lines of cunning and duplicity which marked it; and as the brightening embers cast a red tint on his olive complexion, and his scowling eye rolled on the young stranger in silent but penetrating observation, awed even into horror, she timidly withdrew hers; then cast a trembling look round the vast gloom that surrounded her, and sunk almost lifeless on the stool.

"And is your business with the lady de Rosemont so

pressing that you must see her to-night?" asked her companion, looking keenly under her hat.

"I should indeed wish it," said Imogen, whose heart revived from its transitory terrors at the sound of madame de Rosemont's name; "yet I should be sorry to disturb her if she has retired to rest."

"Oh, for that, she has been in bed these three hours; but give me your packets, and I will have them delivered to her."

"Pardon me," said Imogen; "I was desired to deliver them into no hands but Madame de Rosemont's."

"Is that the case? well, madame shall be informed of your arrival." He then took his lanthorn and walked away.

Imogen who followed with her eye his tall lean figure as it glided along the passages, saw him ascend a flight of stairs; and, when he disappeared, heard two doors, one more distant than the other, clap after him. A thousand vague fears and suspicions took possession of her imagination; which, alive to every impression, was but too liable to exaggerate every evil, as it exalted every good. Yet when after a few minutes absence the man returned, and informed her the lady de Rosemont was ready to receive her, her fears dissipated, and she arose to follow him, with all the sanguine ardour of lively expectation springing from the bosom of gloomy doubt. Having ascended the stairs, passed along a corridor, and entered a suite of rooms, which, vast, gloomy, and cold, betrayed every vestige of decay and desolation, they reached a door which terminated the suite. Her guide then looked round, and, with a smile of indescribable expression, said, "Come, young sir, prepare your credentials;" and opening the door, desired her to walk in. Imogen had scarcely entered the threshold, when, observing the impenetrable darkness of the apartment, she started back; but the guide, pushing her forward, with a savage laugh, closed the door, and locked it on the outside. Imogen, actuated only by the impulse of terror, shrieked, and attempted to force the bolt; but, overcome by her fruitless endeavours, sunk to the earth; while the foot-

steps of her conductor echoed on her ear till they at last died away into distance.

It was now the conviction fully flashed on her mind that she was not in the chateau de Rosemont; but that the simple Robichon had been deceived by the darkness of the night and his own impatience to return; and that it was probable she was now in the power of a band of outlaws or midnight murderers, who had found an asylum amidst the ruins of this vast and desolate edifice. The emotions which this belief awakened were indescribable.

As soon as her eye was familiarized in some degree to the obscurity in which she was involved, she observed the apartment, like the rest through which she had passed, was lofty and spacious; and though the moon had not risen, the misty light of a cloudless firmament was admitted by a high spiral casement, and reflected on a range of black marble pillars which ran along one side of the apartment. Though without even a hope of escaping, Imogen arose, and, as well as her trembling limbs could support her, examined the walls of her prison; when her hand fell on a lock, which without much exertion turned, a door opened, and she found herself in what she supposed was an armoury, by the warlike accoutrements which hung round it, and on which the rising moon now cast her beams. From this observation her eye was attracted by a glimmering light which shone at a distance. Faint with terror, yet emboldened by despair, she advanced, and found it was a fracture in the floor, which admitted a light from some apartment beneath. She bent down her eye, and plainly perceived through the aperture the ruffian who had admitted her into the chateau dozing over a blazing fire, with a tankard and a pair of pistols on a table beside him. At that moment a horn sounded; he started, and, taking up a light, hurried out.

In a few minutes he returned, followed by a party of men armed with cutlasses and pistols; and amidst the general confusion of their voices, Imogen could only at intervals hear enough of their conversation to lead her to suppose they were the party she and Robichon had escaped,

and that they had returned unsuccessful after the expedition of the night.

"What, no booty!" said her ferocious acquaintance; "mass! an' I would not do more sitting over my tankard here than the whole of you put together on the king's high road in the darkest night, why let me never rob a rich priest or proud financier while my name is Bertrand."

Here the party all spoke together, and Imogen could only distinguish the voice of Bertrand, in reply, say: "Why, I caught the bird just at the door of my cage."

"Is he worth murdering?" asked the gloomiest villain of the tribe.

"Nay, as he seems a right delicate dainty youth, we will do the matter genteelly: invite him to supper, and poison him," said Bertrand. "He wears the disguise of a minstrel, and is charged with a packet of importance to the lady de Rosemont, who resides in the neighbourhood; which I would have forced from him, but I could not read them; and he has a purse of gold."

"Which thou wouldst have taken, but that thou dardest not oppose thyself singly to a stripling," said the gloomy villain, snatching up a pistol in one hand, and a light in the other; adding, "but you know me of old to be less tenacious. Where is the stranger? if he escape the chateau, we are lost: dead men tell no tales."

"Nay, start fair," cried the whole party vociferously; and, headed by Bertrand, they all rushed out.

Imogen heard no more: the pangs of death were already on her, yet total insensibility was denied her. The murmur of voices again resounded through the vaulted apartments she had herself passed through; the faint echo of steps became gradually louder; she heard the lock of the outer apartment turn; and a sudden uproar of voices assailed her ears. Terror was wound up to its last strained pitch of agony and distraction. Nature could not sustain the conflict, and Imogen sunk lifeless to the earth.

From a state of temporary death she recovered, under all the horrors that had produced it, *shaken* almost to dissolution. She raised her eyes in the dreadful belief of

meeting those of the murderers, and scarcely credited the testimony of her senses, when she found herself still alone; while the confused murmur of a distant uproar poured like the noise of a raging torrent on her ear, and the light which flashed through the casements shed a brilliant illumination in the apartment. The confusion of her senses rendered her doubtful of their fidelity; and, after a successful attempt to collect her scattered thoughts, she arose and approached the casements, from whence she beheld the court below filled with armed men, some bearing torches, others struggling with the ruffian inhabitants of the chateau, and others binding them in manacles, tying them on horseback, or dragging them to light from the secret coverts whither they had fled. Several shots were fired, and the groans of the wounded were not the least audible among the various and terrifying sounds which reached the ear of the trembling and amazed spectatress. It was during the contemplation of this scene of universal confusion and horror that a thought of emancipation insinuated itself into the beating heart of the trembling captive. Hope flattered her in the belief that the contest, which continued with unabating fury in the front of the chateau, would favour her escape by the rear; and she recollected that the windows of the apartment in which she had been first confined had a different aspect from those of the armoury. She returned thither, and to her inexpressible delight found that the door was open. Without encumbering herself with her lute, which lay on the ground from her first entering the room, she was hurrying away, when the gigantic form of a fierce arquebusier, holding a drawn sword in one hand, a torch in the other, appeared at the door. Imogen shrieked and reeled: the stranger let fall his sword, and grasped her by the shoulder. Imogen fell at his feet, and could only faintly utter, "Mercy!"

"Mercy!" repeated the soldier; "yes, as much mercy as your companions will find, you shall have: as much mercy as they have lately shown to some of our officers, you may expect."

"Alas!" said Imogen, "I am not their companion, but their prisoner. I have not been two hours within the

walls of the chateau, and have reason to believe that I owe my life to the arrival of those strangers whom I beheld in the court below engaged in contest with those who meditated my death."

The soldier looked at her for some time, then at her lute, which lay beside her, and exclaimed: "What, then, you are one of those cunning musicians, who get into our camps and cause desertion amongst our men? Mass! it would be a good deed to—" He paused, and looked ferociously at her, as if more bent on revenge than tenacious of its object. Imogen, almost wholly overcome, could only faintly say, "Save me, enable me to escape, and all I possess shall be yours."

"All you possess!" said the soldier with a loud laugh. "What, you will give me that instrument there, I suppose? well, that is generous! Why, what the plague, did the villains throw away powder and shot upon such a poor little unfledged bird as thou? *Ventre Dieu!* thou art not worth the plucking!"

Imogen then drew her purse from her pocket; and, taking out the diamond ring given her by Pasiphae, she presented all the purse contained to the soldier, who looked for a moment in utter astonishment at the purse, then at the ring, and then at her. "What!" said he; "only this for saving your life! Oh, you narrow-hearted unconscionable little villain! And what am I to have for procuring you your liberty into the bargain?"

"I have nothing more," said Imogen despondingly.

"By St. Catherine, then if you count that ring *nothing*, you may as well give it me."

"Impossible!" said Imogen, "'tis the gift of a deceased friend."

"Yes, yes," said the man, "a *deceased* one, I warrant; you took care of that. But I have no time to spare; my comrades will be up directly: this ring and purse will condemn you, notwithstanding your disguise and your fine story; and you will have the pleasure of accompanying your confederates to the *wheel* to-morrow. Aye, here they are, and now—"

Imogen, trembling and dismayed, gave her ring; and the man, who feared lest his rich booty should be disco-

vered and claimed by his associates, made her take her lute, hurried along the gallery, and, descending a flight of steps, opened a postern gate and pushed her out.

Life preserved and liberty regained left on the heart of Imogen but two predominant sentiments: joy for her unexpected deliverance, and gratitude to Providence for the protection it had afforded her. *The world was now all before her*, but not "*where to chuse;*" for the darkness which hovers on the atmosphere between the flight of night and the dawn of morning prevented her the power of election. Guided rather by her ear than her eye, she only avoided that direction where the still existing uproar marked the place of action, and fled from positive danger without any thought of finding even probable safety. By degrees, as she walked on with as much rapidity as the fatigue and emotion she had endured would permit, the murmur of savage contest and brutal ferocity died away; and a silence, profound as the darkness which accompanied it, reigned on every side. So favourable is the heart to every species of social impression, that Imogen, as she proceeded alone in silence and in darkness, scarcely able to discern the path in which she wandered, almost regretted those terrifying but *human* sounds which had broken on the deathlike stillness of solitude even to desolation; for after she had passed the woodland which skirted the chateau, no tree, no shrub, flung its dark outline on the unvaried gloom of the heath she traversed. Weak, trembling, and cheerless, she glided on for near half a league: till, weary beyond the power of proceeding, she seated herself on a bank beneath the umbrage of the first tree she met; and, laying her lute by her side, determined to wait till the morning dawn should discover some human habitation, whose inhabitants could guide her to the chateau de Rosemont.

The veil of night seemed at last gradually withdrawn, and the landscape, though imperfect to the view, slowly unfolded its boldest features, and betrayed its minuter charms. The sober impression of dawn still diffused its chaste and reserved tints on the horizon; and the colouring of the east, as yet doubtful, by degrees assumed a richer and more determinate glow: the last shadow of

darkness faded on the west; and dawn, awakening from repose, shed her deep blushes on every object: nature reflected back the rosy influence, and, invigorated for action, poured forth with genial liberality tears that nourished, sighs that inspired, and beams that gave a new existence to creation.

The renovated soul of the young wanderer sent up its effusions to heaven, with the mists which arose from the bosom of nature, like a fragrant incense from the altar of grateful piety; and appeared (as, refreshed and inspirited, she gazed from her solitary seat on the rising sun) like the violet which sprung wild and forlorn at her feet, scenting every gale with its odour, and raising its drooping head bathed in dew to the genial influence of every sun-beam. Imogen could not help assimilating herself to the flower; and, placing the modest blossom in her bosom, whose state of solitary desolation so strongly resembled her own, she arose, threw the string of her lute over her shoulder, and ascended an eminence which commanded an extensive view. The breeze, as it lifted the clouds from the valleys, discovered a scene rich and beautiful beyond the powers of delineation. On one side, the turrets of the chateau she had so recently left rose on the hazy mists of distance; while on the other the high road wound round the base of a hill, on whose summit the purple vapours of the morning dawn still hovered.

To the road Imogen descended, as the safest and most direct she could take; and having refreshed herself at a clear stream which murmured near the pathway, she continued to wander on, till, observing a small column of smoke staining the atmosphere, and something rising through the trees like a chimney, she quickened her pace, and soon arrived before a cottage which partly lay in ashes, while the smoke still ascended from its ruins, and evident traces of desolation (the grass burnt up and the pasturage destroyed) were visible on every side. Imogen paused in silent and pitying contemplation of the scene before her, when something like a human form crept from among the ruins: it wore a female habit, and bent beneath the burthen of a few dried sticks. Without appearing much surprised at the fair stranger's appear-

ance, who gazed on her with horror and compassion, she said, with an air of affliction, pointing to the ruins, "That is a sorry sight!"

"Sorry indeed!" said Imogen.

"This is all the benefit we derive from civil war," added the woman.

"This was not then an accidental fire?" demanded Imogen.

"No, no!" said the woman wildly; "I had one son fighting for the king and the other for the League: two fine youths! What business had they to meddle with party? They were happy and laborious, and dear to each other; but their brotherly love turned to deadly hatred; and—see, stranger! that withered spot is stained with the blood of my younger son, drawn by his elder brother, because he refused to change his religion and his party!"

An expression of agony even beyond distraction invested the haggard countenance of the narrator; and then she added, "The fellow-soldiers of my deceased son murdered my first-born; in my arms murdered him; and consumed his corse with this dwelling. But hush! be secret, and I will shew you the spot where I have collected his precious ashes apart from those of the ruins: oh, trust the mother's heart for that! Come, come!" she cried in a deep tone, and offering her hand to Imogen with an impatient air; then with the wild, heart-piercing shriek of distraction, she exclaimed: "See! see! 'tis my boy!" and plunged amidst the ruins, pursuing the phantom of her own disordered imagination and broken heart.

Imogen now first perceived that she had been conversing with a maniac. Struck with horror by the discovery, and filled with the tenderest compassion for the sufferings of the unhappy and distracted mother, she fled the spot where the still sensible heart of the lunatic bled over the ashes of her murdered child; and pursued her way, lost in those reflections her melancholy adventure had given rise to.

"In tracing," said she, "the historic register of calamities which in every age warfare, whether foreign or domestic, has brought upon the human species, the eye

dwells only upon general and public facts; for the historian is but the recorder of battles and sieges, of victory or defeat: but the tale of woe with which the private sufferings of the individual could wring the heart, steals into eternal oblivion with the cruelties and oppression that caused them."

As Imogen proceeded, every step presented some vestige of recent desolation; and the road she had taken seemed totally unfrequented, although she observed the glittering of arms on the summit of a distant hill. While the timid traveller was lost in doubt whether to proceed or turn down a road that presented itself, a peasant overtook her. Though almost bending beneath a load he carried on his shoulder, he addressed her with a smiling countenance and a courteous air. Imogen's heart bounded to the grateful accents of courtesy, and she returned his salute with all the kindness it was made.

"It is a charming morning," said the peasant, "and *mort de ma vie*, the sun looks so gay, and the air is so sweet, and every thing so smiling, that it must be a heart *diablement lugubre* that does not smile too. For my part, when the sun shines, I cannot choose but be happy: yet, marry, with no great reason either; 'tis but a week since my little cottage was first plundered by one party of the soldiery and then burnt by the other. But then our *grand monarque* won a battle the same day, so my wife and I made a *feu de joie* with the ruins of our cottage. The next day we removed a little lower down the country, built a hut on the banks of the clearest stream in the world, and with some little matter we saved from the ruin of our farm, have not as yet wanted the *de quoi vivre*. And you, monsieur, I suppose, are going to try your luck at the camp, which lies before Laon, some leagues off. I once played a little on the viol and tabor myself, until the steward of our seigneur caught me one day playing when I should have been at work, and broke the viol over my head; and so I never had the heart to play again."

Imogen, delighted with the *naïveté* of her companion, and pleased with the gay philosophy of his character, so truly French, felt that his voluntary detail of his domes-

tic circumstances called for reciprocity of confidence: and entered, though with reservation, into the adventures of the late eventful night; throwing as much of "the doublet and hose into her disposition" as might enable her to fill up, without awakening suspicion, the character she had assumed, and from which she believed she had already derived more protection than the habit of the timid novice could have insured.

"So," said the peasant, "I suppose you were going to look for a situation in the chateau de Rosemont, and had the good fortune to get admittance into the chateau Noir, the most noted nest for banditti in the province? It was but two days back they fell upon two officers of the royal army, and murdered them in the forest of Folambray. A party of the soldiers have been lying in wait for them ever since, and surprised them last night just as they had returned from an expedition. This morning before dawn I met the whole party."

"Then the soldiers were victorious?" said Imogen.

"They took the villains, to a man," said the peasant.

Imogen, who dared not mention the money which she had been plundered of by the soldier, lest it should excite the suspicion of her companion, was now determined to pursue her way to the chateau de Rosemont, and enquired from the peasant the nearest road.

"Lord help thee!" said he; "why thou art going from it as fast as thou canst. But thou seemest weary, poor soul! and, marry, thou dost not look as if thou couldst bear much fatigue; therefore thou hadst better tarry at our hut and refresh thyself awhile, and then thou wilt be better able to continue thy journey."

"I am indeed young at the profession," said Imogen colouring, "and as yet little inured to fatigue; besides, I have suffered much anxiety since yester even: I will therefore accept thy hospitable offer with gratitude."

"Why, that is well said," exclaimed the peasant: "and look! yonder rises the smoke of our hut, just above the little coppice to the left. You must know, I have been on the skirts of the forest all night, cutting wood, which I sell at the next market town; there is some hazard in doing it, but necessity has no law, and

one cannot stand by and see their children starve: ay, here they are, dear little souls! many a long look-out they have had since dawn for me, I warrant." While he spoke, two lovely boys and a little girl ran towards him; he laid down his burthen to kiss and give them his blessing, which he did with an air of patriarchal tenderness and piety. The two boys then dragged the parcel of wood after them by the leathern thong which bound it; while the little girl, gazing timidly on the stranger, fastened round her father's neck, who carried her home in his arms.

At the door of the hut they were met by a young woman, whose sun-burnt, but expressive face was lit up with joy and affection, as she took her daughter from her husband's arms to fill them with herself: "Dearest Baptiste," said she, wiping away the tear with which she had bedewed his cheek, as she pressed it to her own; "I am so happy you are returned! I have not closed an eye all night, for how could I sleep and know you were exposed to danger? The dame Jacinthe too was here just after you had left me, and told me such a tale of the robbers of Chateau Noir!"

"Plague take the dame and her croaking!" said Baptiste: "had I not your prayers, and the prayers of my little ones, my sweet Josephine? that is the husband's and the father's shield: but see! I have brought thee a guest."

Josephine now first beheld the young and timid stranger; who, modestly retreating behind her host, contemplated in silent rapture the first scene of social and domestic felicity she had ever beheld. It was to Imogen a festival of the feelings; and the tear that glittered in her eye, the smile that dimpled her cheek, betrayed a heart formed to feel and to enjoy that bliss it throbbed with delight only to observe.

Josephine, with blushing courtesy, welcomed her interesting guest: while the children, with playful surprise, touched the strings of her lute, then retreated; then, lured back by the stranger's supplicating smiles, hung on her dress, or sported in her arms. The grateful mother checked their familiarity with a look of ten-

der reprehension : while Imogen, delighted with their little freedoms, loaded them with caresses ; and, gay and innocent as themselves, displayed a playfulness infantine as their own.

When Josephine had prepared their noontide repast, the little group circled round a table laid beneath the spreading branches of an elder on the banks of the stream Baptiste had boasted of, and spread with such coarse and simple fare as the unviated palate of nature, stimulated by a long-unsatisfied appetite, only could relish. When it was concluded, grace was pronounced by the master of the simple feast with a devotional energy, which showed it not the result of habitual ceremony, but the pious effusion of existing and grateful feelings. The young minstrel then tuned her lute, and repayed the hospitable courtesies of her hosts with several popular ballads and tender vaudevilles* : many of them the impulsive effusion of genius, appropriate to the scene of rural and domestic felicity the songstress then witnessed ; and all calculated to harmonize with the simple taste of her auditors, and the native gaiety of the French heart. At last, at the request of her delighted hosts, she struck up a villanelle, the then prevailing rustic dance of the French peasant ; and Baptiste, unable to resist the magic influence of the sportive strain, sprung on his feet, and, with a boy in each hand, performed a spontaneous ballet, with a dexterous and spirited hilarity, that might almost compensate for the deficiency of grace and method with which it was executed ; while Josephine took her reel, gazed with pleased satisfaction at the performance, and sung at intervals a couplet adapted to the air. Every pulse in the gay heart of Imogen throbbed in sweet vibration to the vivacious strain her flying fingers produced ; and when she cast round her eyes, and beheld the frugal remnants of the coarse meal industry had provided for the necessities of nature ; the clay-built hut, which scarcely excluded " the penalties of Adam ; the season's changes," and the ragged drapery of wretched-

* La vaudeville appartient exclusivement aux Français ; et ils en ont de très piquantes, et de très plaisantes.

Dictionnaire de Musique, par J. J. Rousseau.

ness, which scarcely veiled the weather-injured forms of laborious poverty : yet beheld in every countenance that surrounded her, those beams of joy the heart only emanates, whose bright irradiation dispelled the pensive gloom adversity hangs upon the brow of its victim ; the glowing tints of pleasure flushed the cheek recent oppression had stained with a tear, and gaiety unrestrained animating those limbs to frolic exercise, which but a moment before bent beneath the hard-earned burden labour had procured for the suppliance of indigence and distress :

"Such is thy power, oh sweet affection of the heart !" sighed Imogen : "oppressed by tyranny, despoiled by the licentious rapine of warfare, driven to the last outline of misery, to herd with the beast of the field and bird of the air ; still, while the heart can turn and drown its sufferings in domestic joy, while the endearments of social life lisp their soft comforts to the ear of the sufferer, and every tie of tenderness and love twined round the soul administers an ameliorating charm to sooth its sorrows, the arrow of adversity drops stingless, and despondency smiles away her woes on the bosom of domestic felicity."

The thoughts of Imogen then reverted to the convent of St. Dominick ; she shuddered, and blessed the liberty she had regained, though every step of its progressive attainment had been marked by the track of danger.

The children, now weary with their sportive play, threw themselves into their mother's arms ; and Baptiste, taking up his hatchet, advised his young guest to take some repose, and wait till the sun declined before he recommenced his journey, went to work himself ; while Josephine, gratefully thanking him for the amusement he had afforded her little family, spread with her own hands some dried leaves freshly gathered within their hut, on which Imogen flung herself with a sensation more grateful than she had ever felt before : for she had taken no rest for the two preceding nights, and soon fell into a profound and tranquil sleep.

On the pillow of innocence the spirit of repose loves to prolong his balmy influence, and struggles with nature

to protract his empire; and the eye which anxiety has sullied with a tear, gladly closes the heavy lid, and shuts out the intrusive beam that wakes it to new care. The sun had already passed the meridional line, and faintly sketched the shadow of the hills on the plain below: when the children of Baptiste, thrumming on her lute, roused her from her leafy bed. Sweet had been the dream of her rest, for it was a dream of love; and the busy agency of imagination had lured her to the banks of the Durance, where fancy twined the flowery band with which affection wreathed the polished brow of the minstrel of Provence; the dew which bathed its leaves was a tear of the soul, and the gale that perfumed them a sigh from the heart: the visioned minstrel touched a shadowy lyre, and while the soul of passion floated on every dying note, the blue dissolving eye-beam of Imogen mingled with the minstrel's burning glance.

The strain of love still faded on her ear, when she awoke and recognized the tones of her own lute: her dream's soft trance had diffused a delicious emotion through her whole frame; and while memory dwelt on the fanciful rapture, a tear hung upon the languishing smile which played round her lip, that it was indeed but fanciful, and haply never, never to be realized!

At the door of the hut, while the children fondled round her, she was met by Josephine and Baptiste; they were both anxious she should remain with them that night, but having learnt that the chateau de Rosemont was but *four hours'* walk from their hut, and hoping to reach it by sunset, she gratefully declined their offer: and having thanked them in all the warm effusions of a heart alive to every delicate minutia of the most refined gratitude, she promised they should hear shortly from her; and that as soon as she should have obtained any interest with the lady of the castle, it should be exerted in their favour, while she blushed to confess she could make them no other return for their kindness. For Imogen, despoiled of her little treasures by the arquebusier, possessed nothing but the picture of the chevalier enclosed in the letter of Pasiphae, and the small agate cross which had never left her bosom since the day she had been received at the

convent of St. Dominick: then having embraced the children, and kissed the hand of Josephine, with the well-affected gallantry of a young cavalier, she proceeded on her little journey, accompanied for about half a league by Baptiste, who, pointing to the forest of Folambray, desired her to take the path which wound round its skirts, and that from an eminence to the left of the road she would see the turrets of the chateau de Rosemont, which would guide her for the rest of her journey. He then shook her kindly by the hand, and wishing that they might shortly meet again, left her to pursue her solitary journey.

The mind of Imogen had been as much cheered by the sweet visitant of her blissful dream, as her frame was refreshed and invigorated by repose. The sun rode high in the horizon, and spread the rich influence of his mellow tints on the landscape. The mountain breeze cooled the sultry glow of the hour, and gave spirit to health, strength to motion, and fragrance to the sense of the traveller; who, supported by a long white staff presented to her by Baptiste, and with her lute flung over her shoulder, lightly bounded on. Locomotion is ever favourable to the reflective powers; air, exercise, and diversity of objects, awaken the pulse of thought to its liveliest throb; and many a weary step is sweetly beguiled of its tedious length, by those blossoms the finger of fancy strews over it.

Imogen wandered on in that sweet inebriety of the feelings and the senses, which the freshness, the variety, and splendid beauty of every thing around her contributed to awaken. Sometimes, as reflection led, she opposed the childless misery of the maniac mother, from whose bosom the horrors of fanaticism and party had torn every human comfort, to the domestic felicity of Baptiste's charming family; who, though suffering from the same baleful cause, had still rescued from the rifling hand of cruel and licentious rapacity, those sweet blossoms of affection's growth, without which the heart is but a desert and desolate void. "Alas!" thought Imogen, "that the ingenuity of man, wantoning in the variety and extent of its powers, should so frequently, and so successfully exert

its influence to pervert the best blessings of Providence! Was it for this the God of goodness gave us hearts to love, minds to feel, and sympathy to attract the tender affections of the soul to its kindred soul?" Then the gay caprice of imagination stole on the sober disquisition of the little moralist, and the soft recollection of her dream gave to her contemplation

"The vision'd picture
Of Fancy 'tranc'd in bliss."

From these gay luxuriant dreams of a still enamoured heart, Imogen awoke to the recollection of the object of her journey; and, now first discovered that, lost in the indulgence of "the idle visions of her brain," she had wandered from the beaten track pointed out to her by Baptiste, and had left the eminence she should have ascended a considerable distance to the left: vexed at her inattention, and already something weary, she turned back, and, after a walk of near half an hour, found herself at the foot of the eminence, which, steep and rugged, she with some difficulty ascended. The sun was setting, and irradiated with its crimson beams the scene which expanded in gay luxuriance beneath; the extensive forest of Follambray spread to the north-west to a considerable distance; the summit of its lofty trees, tinged with gold, and waving to the evening breeze, appeared like the undulating waves of the ocean, receiving on their dark green heads the fading beams of the west; while the casements of the chateau, which arose on the left, were brilliantly illuminated with the reflection of the setting sun, that sunk in the horizon as Imogen descended the eminence, and struck into the path described by Baptiste as winding round the skirts of the forest, and leading to the chateau de Rosemont.

The impatience of the weary traveller increased with every step, as the shadows lengthened on her path, and the sober drapery of evening hung its misty wreaths on every object: the dusky accompaniments of twilight already invested the lately glowing scene; the lustre of nature was veiled, and the eye of the wanderer dwelled on

the repose of her charms which breathed silence and solemnity. Although this was the hour that ever spoke a soft and impassioned language to her heart, yet that heart no longer acknowledged the sweet impression; while her fears increased with every deepening shadow of darkness. Her step was no longer the loitering pace of pausing rapture or delusive thought, but rapid, almost to flight, and interrupted only by breathless fatigue: it was perhaps this singular rapidity which attracted the notice of a body of horsemen, who struck into the path she had taken, and with loud imprecations called to her to stop. Imogen, whose imaginary fears were wound up to real terror that banished all presence of mind, plunged into the forest, instead of obviating suspicion by voluntarily exposing herself to the scrutiny of observation.

But Imogen, who fled, not from the hope that flight could ensure safety, but from the impulse of apprehension, soon found herself overtaken by two of the horsemen: one of them alighting, seized her roughly by the shoulder, and looking earnestly at her, exclaimed, "*Ventre St. Gris!* a right dainty youth, a rare musician too, I warrant: but you seem a little weary, monsieur; I will therefore spare you the trouble of a race, and provide you with a more expeditious mode of travelling." Then raising the faint and unresisting Imogen in his arms, whom fear and amazement deprived of the power of speech, he placed her on horseback behind his companion, a Spanish arquebuser; and strapping her on to the waist of his surly associate, who cast round a terrific glance, he mounted his horse, and they joined the rest of the party.

"Well Guy," exclaimed one of them, "what have you shot flying?"

"A dainty nightingale," said Guy, as they rode on, "who would have found his way to our camp to delight our men with his minstrelsy; like the other gentleman musician who slipped through our fingers at the siege of Rouenne, a trusty spy, or I am no soldier."

"Nay, then," replied the other, "he stands acquitted; for if he is no more a spy, than thou art a soldier,——"

"Why, how now, Armande?" said Guy: "why dost thou ever come over me thus with thy jests?"

"*Mort de ma vie!* if it were as easy to come over thee in jest, as to overcome thee in earnest, monsieur bluster, thou wouldest not be worth the breaking a gibe on," said Armande.

"Come, come, Armande," cried another, "a truce with your grape-shot wit; and let us have the story you told us, on the foraging-party last night, of the king who came, in the disguise of a minstrel, to the enemy's camp: marry, it pleased me hugely!"

"Perhaps," said Armande, "this young cavalier would rather hear the pleasant and tragical ditty of the young man whom we hanged for a spy, during our campaign in Normandy."

"Hush! hush!" exclaimed Guy, "I hear the neighing of a steed, and sure I see a distant light; blessed rosary! there goes a dreadful story of a ghost in armour, mounted on a white steed, meeting one of our kings in this same forest, and——"

"To think how a man's fears will run away with his wits!" said Armande; "truly, monsieur Guy, thou art a rare fellow, with thy ghost in armour, not to see that we are within a few paces of the vidette guard."

Here they came up with the vidette, and having stopped for a few moments to break some coarse jokes with their fellow-soldiers, who were going to their out-posts for the night, they continued their rout until the lights of the camp broke on the darkness of the night, and they arrived at the piquet guard.

"*Qui vive?*" demanded the centinel. "*Vive la ligue!*" replied the foremost; "advance and give the parole." "*Louise de Guise.*" The soldier then advanced, and whispered the counter-sign; and the whole party were suffered to pass on to the camp, whose midnight stillness was only interrupted by the clanking of the armourers, the neighing of steeds, the frequent "*Qui vive?*" of the sentinels, and the faint burst of conviviality which proceeded from the tents of the officers, near which they passed.

Those scenes, so novel and so striking, would have interested the mind, and pleased the picturesque fancy of Imogen, had she been a spectatress under any other circumstances; but wholly overcome by the situation in which she found herself, the danger to which she was exposed, and the fatigue she had undergone, every faculty was blunted, and her mind acknowledged no sentiment, no emotion, but what terror and amazement awakened; while amidst the confusion of her ideas she with difficulty learnt, by the conversation of her guards, that she was brought a prisoner to the rebel camp.

The party stopped before the tent where the first quarter-guard of the night was stationed. "What hast thou got here?" said the sentinel, who paraded before the tent. "A swan," said Bertrand, "whose dying notes you may hear at the provot to-morrow, if you please. Who is the captain of the guard for the night?"

"The count St. Dorval."

"It strikes me," said Bertrand in a low voice, "we have picked up a prisoner of consequence: I will deliver him into the count's hands; my back still smart^s for the escape of the young baron whom we picked up in the same way. Where is the count?"

"Within the tent, at supper with some few of his officers."

Bertrand, who had the command of the party, alighted, and entered the tent: in a few minutes he returned, ordered two of the soldiers to unbind the prisoner and assist him to dismount. Guarded on either side, and preceded by Bertrand, the trembling Imogen was led, or rather dragged, into the guard-room; while round a table, well furnished with lights and wine, circled a group of officers, who all turned round to gaze at the prisoner, as, drooping disconsolately timid, she endeavoured to collect her thoughts, and enable herself to clear up the mystery of her appearance, without discovering more of her story than might lead to her liberation.

"Where didst thou pick up this young musician, serjeant?" demanded the youngest of the group.

"On the skirts of the forest of Folambray, so please

you, where it is said the king regaled himself* but yesterday with some of his officers. I thought this minstrel might have been of the party; and as he seemed inclined to take the road towards our camp, I did him the kindness to save him the trouble of walking, monsieur."

"A little more matter of fact, and less jocularity:" said the commanding officer.

"Nay, monseigneur," said Bertrand, "I have nothing more to relate; we have not laid a hand on the prisoner, except indeed to disencumber him of this instrument, and under favour must refer you to himself for further information."

Such a variety of interrogation from every side followed this assertion, uttered by some with all the rudeness of inebriety, and by others with a spirit of savage raillery that sported wantonly with the feelings of its object, that Imogen, unable to articulate, and overwhelmed by the influence of her strong and various emotions, involuntarily clung to the shoulder of one of her guards, and trembled with a violence that attracted the compassionate regard of the count St. Derval. Rising from the head of the table, he advanced towards the prisoner; and having mildly checked the unmeaning curiosity of the young officers, he addressed her.

"Whoe'er thou art," said he, "or whate'er thy intentions, young stranger, the silence you seem obstinately to observe, will avail thee nought; the laws of war are sacred, and you are doubtless no stranger to the penalty annexed to their violation. Our cause has already suffered from the successful artifice of the enemy's vigilant spies; and though that delicate and trembling frame seems ill calculated for perilous adventure, it is evident that that disguise veils no common wearer."

"Nor shall it avail thee ought," said a young ensign, throwing off the hat which concealed her face, and confined a profusion of long tresses, that now fell luxuriantly

* Henry IV. during the siege of Laon, went to dine in the forest of Folambray, where he had often been regaled, when a boy, with fruit and milk and new cheese, and in visiting which he promised himself great pleasure.

round a neck, whose dazzling whiteness was no longer veiled; for another, more inhumanly daring than the first, rudely tore open the collar of her robe, in attempting to drag her forward to the light, and the ruff which shaded her neck fell with it. It was at that moment the woman's delicacy surmounted the woman's weakness: Imogen cast round an eager look, that seemed to demand a glance of sympathy, of protection. The eye of the count de St. Dorval only answered it; and the trembling prisoner, with a sudden effort of strength, sprung from her guard's rude grasp, and fell at the feet of one, in whose venerable countenance shone the protecting benignity of Heaven itself. "Save me," exclaimed Imogen, "and—" what she would have added died on her trembling lip, but the uplifted, supplicating eye of distress, wept tears that spoke.

A moment of general amazement and consternation ensued; all crowded round the prostrate prisoner, and every eye beamed admiration and surprize; admiration at her charms, surprize that she was still prostrate: for while with hands folded on her throbbing bosom, she knelt faint and speechless at the feet of the protector the intuition of sympathy had elected; the count de St. Dorval hung over her in silence: his arms, outstretched to receive the suppliant, were stiffened in the attitude of wonder, surpassing the transitory emotion of commonplace surprize; the eye that shed a mild compassion on the fugitive, suddenly changed its expression to the ardent gaze, whose thrilling glances beamed with soul, and swam in tears; and a faint ejaculation escaped the quivering lip that would have uttered the accents of beneficence and encouragement. Then, with a long-drawn sigh, he seemed to shake off the strong influence of emotion, and bending over Imogen, raised her tenderly in his arms; and, placing her on a chair, held with a trembling hand a glass of water to her lips. More revived by the affectionate though silent benevolence of his manner, than the refreshing beverage he administered, Imogen looked gratefully and expressively in his face; and, replying to the eloquence of that look, he said: "Cheer thee, cheer thee, sweet lady; whatever may have been

the motive which led thee to adopt this disguise, and to incur the perils of adventure, in times themselves so perilous, thou hast nothing now to fear from the indignant insults of unfeeling ignorance, invested with temporary power to bear down upon the unfortunate: 'tis the count St. Dorval, who pledges himself to be true to the voluntary confidence you have honoured him with."

"Well said, count!" exclaimed one of the officers, unproved at his commander's oblique reproach.

"*Ventre Dieu, monseigneur*, you are a fortunate man!" added another: "and I would rather be invested with such a command, than be made generalissimo to the whole army."

"Gentlemen," said the count firmly, "these are idle insinuations. To the commander in chief I stand accountable for the prisoner; to God and my own conscience for her safety in the most unlimited sense: what right we have to detain her must be a matter of future investigation; but while that detention exists, the gallantry of knighthood forbid we should not all consider ourselves as bound to render her every succour! Come, lady, suffer me to conduct you to my tent, where you can repose at least in safety."

The count, with an air of paternal freedom, drew the arm of the still bewildered Imogen through his own: and, while the officers drew back abashed, led her to his tent, which lay but a few paces from that of the quarter-guard. It was a spacious and elegant pavilion, and divided into three apartments, in the first of which the count's squire and page were playing at chess; to the last the count, followed by a page with lights, conducted his guest.

"This apartment," said the count, with a faint smile, "is to be your prison for to-night: I myself will be at once your servant and your guard. Meanwhile reckon on the exertions of a friend in your favour, who trusts he will not prove himself unworthy of your election: with enemies, who wear such looks as thine, we wage no war; and whatever motive may have lured thee to the dangerous precincts of a camp, that protection thy youth and sex demands, shall attend thee hence and guard thee

there." The count then, without waiting to receive the acknowledgments which hovered on the lips of Imogen, recommended to her to take that repose her evident weariness demanded, and retired.

The count had left the apartment but a few minutes, and Imogen was indulging the copious flow of those sweet tears which stream from the heart in the moment of safety received from the grasp of peril; of gratitude awakening to the touch of unexpected benevolence; when a page entered the apartment with those necessary refreshments her exhausted nature required. Having swallowed some bread and wine, she dismissed the attendant, and her full heart made its offering to Heaven for the comparative safety she enjoyed; and all its grateful emotions pointed towards the friend it had raised for her in the hour of danger and distress. If the benevolent, though melancholy expression of St. Dorval's countenance, his venerable and interesting aspect, had won her confidence in the first moment that her eye had met his, every word he uttered, every glance he emanated, and even the soft sadness that hung upon his faint smile, confirmed the intuitive dictates of her sympathy; and she scarcely regretted the perilous adventure which had made her known to one, in whose looks of benignity and sweetness her hopes faintly traced future acts of kindness and friendship.

From the character of a spy, a supposition which excited a smile, to his cool and unbiassed apprehension she could easily vindicate herself; and to his protecting kindness she should at last owe her safe arrival at the chateau de Rosemont. The sanguine expectations of unpractised youth receive with eager susceptibility the warm impression of its wishes; the faintest beam of sympathy is adequate to illumine the fading lamp of hope; and fancy darts athwart those probable obstacles, prudence shrinks from encountering.

At last, overcome by the bodily and mental fatigue she had endured, Imogen deposited on the table the packet she had so successfully concealed in her bosom; and, without divesting herself of an article of her dress, threw herself on a couch that filled a corner of the apartment.

A deep sleep soon stole on the perturbation of her senses ; it was the profound repose of innocence long torn from its "*calm mood*," by anxiety and fatigue ; and the dream of her rest still gave to her imagination the image of him, to whose benevolence and compassion she owed its enjoyment.

END OF VOL. I.

THE
NOVICE
OF
SAINT DOMINICK.

BY MISS OWENSON,
AUTHOR OF THE WILD IRISH GIRL, &c.

For *Truth* and *Good* are one ;
And Beauty dwells in them, and they in her,
With like participation. *Atenside.*

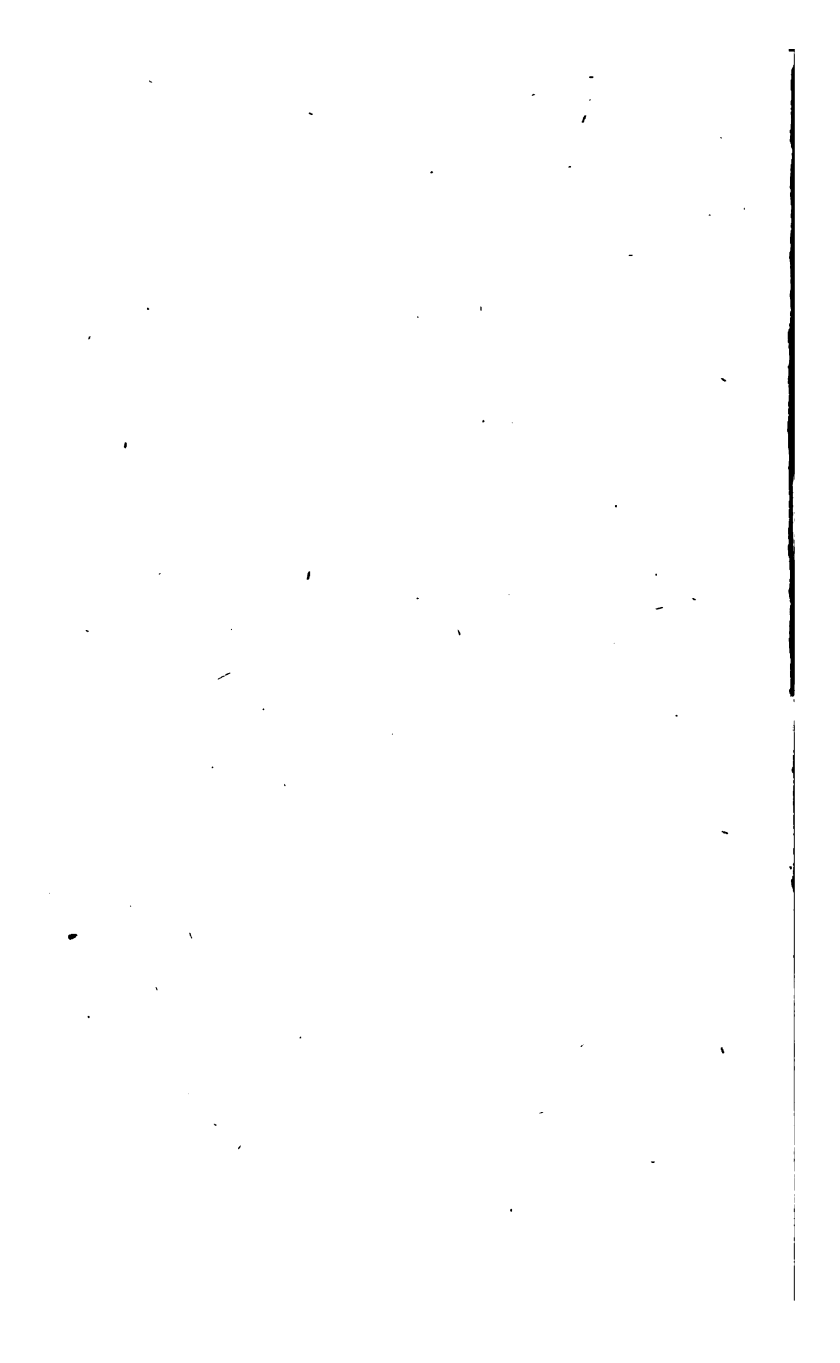
Forse se tu gustasse anco una volta,
La milissima parte delle Geoje,
Che gusto un core amato riamando,
Aireste repentita Sospirando,
Perduto e tutto il tempo,
Che, in amor non se spenda. *Tasso.*

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

PRINTED FOR AND PUBLISHED BY T. S. MANNING,
NO. 143 NORTH THIRD STREET,
PHILADELPHIA.

1807.



THE
NOVICE OF SAINT DOMINICK.

CHAP. XII.

One part, one little part, we dimly scan
Thro' the dark medium of life's feverish dream,
Yet dare arraign the whole stupendous plan,
If but that little part incongruous seem ;
Nor is that part perhaps what mortals deem.
Oft from apparent ill our blessings rise :
Oh ! then renounce that impious self-esteem,
That aims to trace the secrets of the skies ;
For thou art but of dust—be humble, and be wise.

Minstrel, B. I.

Recordivi che'l primo dolce peso
Fui de le vostre braccia e prima io n'hebbe
I cari baci e vi gli diede spesso.

Iphigenia.—DOLCE.

It was the trumpet's warlike blast, the martial clang of arms, the deep-toned word of command, echoing from rank to rank, that roused Imogen from the sweets of obli-viating repose. She started from her pillow ; recol-lection slowly returned, and the events of the preceding night, the circumstance of her present situation, floated "like half-forgotten dreams" in her mind.

While she was still engaged in disentangling her ideas from the confusion in which they were involved, a woman entered the apartment. She introduced herself as the wife of a soldier, whom the count had sent to offer her ser-vices. The form of a female was a grateful object to the eyes of Imogen ; and, while the woman officiously assist-ed at her simple toilet, Imogen thankfully accepted her

services. This military female was in every sense of the word a Frenchwoman, free, communicative, and unreserved, and not a little curious as to the disguise of the fair prisoner ; to whom she related a long story of a lady who had got into the camp in a soldier's dress to see her knight the evening before the battle of Ivri. Imogen, laughingly, assured her that that had not been the object of her disguise ; and, pleased with her garrulity, chatted to her with that fascinating condescension which ever wins on the heart of humble inferiority.

As soon as she had finished the very necessary and refreshing duties of the toilet, her attendant retired, and in a few minutes a page entered to inform her the count waited breakfast for her in the outward apartment.—Thither Imogen followed him. The count was leaning pensively over the back of a chair, on which his helmet and sword were laid. A few grey locks, no longer confined by the pressure of the weighty casque, played on a forehead more strongly marked with the traces of care than the furrows of age ; and in his countenance was that mingled expression of benevolence and melancholy, which evinced that he had learnt to appreciate the sufferings of others by his own ; and that the beneficent impulses of his heart were confirmed by the suggestion of his own internal feelings.

When Imogen entered, he started and gazed on her with little less emotion than he had done the preceding night ; till observing the modest confusion with which her eyes avoided his, he approached, and, taking her hand with paternal familiarity, enquired how she had passed the night, with more solicitude than ceremony ; then, having dismissed the page, drew a chair for her, and seated himself beside her with the easy freedom of an old acquaintance. Imogen already forgot that he in fact was not so : while the count pressed her to partake of a camp's homely fare, Imogen attempted to express the emotions of gratitude his kindness had awakened ; but hers was not a heart to cherish feelings capable of expression ; and the sigh that died on her lip, the tear that swam in her eye, was the only eloquence that nature gave them.

"And why these tears?" said the count, taking her hand; "flow they from the recollection of sufferings sustained, or from an apprehension of dangers yet to come? Has the spirit of enthusiasm which characterizes these times betrayed thee into an adventure beyond thy powers to encounter? or has a softer cause than that of party spirit or fancied loyalty led thee to adopt this disguise and brave the vigilance of our guards?"

"No, my lord," said Imogen, "these are not tears of apprehension or regret, but such as the full heart sends to the eye when words fail to express its feelings: had you been less kind, they had flowed perhaps, but not from so sweet a cause."

The count seemed still to hang upon the sound of her voice for some minutes after it had ceased to vibrate; then he emphatically exclaimed: "That sweet voice of thine, fair mysterious stranger, breathes no unknown accent on my ear: it speaks peace to my heart; it revives each dormant power of joyous emotion, and sheds upon my retreating life the faint reflection of that sun which beamed upon its dawn. Speak! who and what art thou, that cometh thus endued with magic spell to wake the dead to life, and pour a flood of transient joy upon a heart whose every spring of happiness has long since been exhausted?" Then, observing the effect his singular emotion had produced in the astonished countenance of his guest, he added faintly; "But forgive me, lady; my feelings are my masters; even at this age they lead me where they will; and your strong resemblance of a person who — is no more — might well rouse them to their wildest excess of tyranny! But when I request some account of my fair prisoner, it is to save her that publicity of detail I am sure she would shrink from encountering; for the report of a female spy of some rank having been taken prisoner last night has already circulated through the camp."

There was an inexpressible something in the air, the looks, and voice, of the count de St. Dorval, that would have won unlimited confidence from the narrow heart of distrust itself; and the all-confiding, sanguine character of Imogen dilated to the sympathetic influence of her il-

lustrious host's candid and ingenuous manners. With brief simplicity she related her little story, slightly touching on her aversion to the life to which she had been devoted ; and relating those adventures which had marked her flight from the chateau de Montmorell, and preceded her having been taken a prisoner, with undeviating accuracy. She then presented the packet, addressed to the lady de Rosemont, to whom she was recommended, in proof of the veracity of her detail.

The interest which the count took in her simple narration betrayed itself in his countenance ; and amazement stole on the admiration of his gaze as she pronounced the name of de Rosemont and presented him the packet.

"Madame de Rosemont !" he repeated ; "and who recommended thee, sweet fugitive, to *her* protection ?"

"The minor canoness of St. Dominick, my lord."

"The minor canoness of St. Dominick ! Merciful God ! and knew you the canoness ? and were *you* at the convent of St. Dominick ?"

"The minor canoness of St. Dominick," said Imogen, wiping away a falling tear, "was my only friend ; and recollection goes not so far back as to my entrance at the convent of St. Dominick."

"Who were thy parents ?" demanded the count eagerly.

"I never knew them," replied Imogen feelingly. "Deserted by them in my infancy, I was received at the wheel of St. Dominick, and reared on the charitable institution of the order."

"And was there no article of dress, no circumstance, that could lead to the discovery of your friends ?" asked the count in a voice scarcely articulate.

"None," said Imogen, infected with his emotion ; "a coarse veil was wrapt round my infant form ; and this cross, which was suspended round my neck, bore no mark but the initials of the saint to whom I was devoted, and on the reverse the name of *Imogen*, by which name the abbess had me baptised."

"Shew me that cross," said the count faintly. Imogen loosened it from her neck, and presented it with a hand almost as trembling as that which was eagerly stretched

out to receive it. The count gazed on it till his glazed eye dropt tears; then almost breathless with agitation he inarticulately exclaimed: "Lady, eighteen years ago this cross was fastened round the neck of my only child. Merciful heaven, mock not my hopes! Yet, oh my heart, lie still! That child bore on her cheek, and just beneath her left temple, a singular mark; it was indelible; not the effect of accident, but born with her."

"Was it—such—as this?" faintly, tremblingly, exclaimed Imogen, falling instinctively at the count's feet, and raising those luxuriant tresses which shaded her temple; "was it such as this?"

Agitated almost to dissolution, panting, breathless, the count's eyes rolled in silence on the mark; then were raised to heaven with an expression of hope, gratitude, and ecstasy; while with a sigh that seemed to rend his heart he faintly exclaimed: "God of Omnipotence! my child!" and stretching forward to receive her in his arms, fell lifeless on the earth.

Imogen sunk on the bosom of her new-found father, and the shriek that escaped her lips brought the squire and page into the apartment.

Amazed at the scene which presented itself, and suspecting that the disguised prisoner was the cause of the situation in which they found their apparently lifeless lord, instead of giving him the assistance he required, they rudely seized the prostrate Imogen; who, clinging to the count, faintly exclaimed, "My father! oh my father!" The tone of her voice reached the faintly throbbing heart of the count, and stole with renovating influence on his senses. Imogen raised his drooping head on her bosom; and, bathing his hands with her tears, softly demanded, "Am I indeed thy child?" The count clasped her hands in his, fixed his ardent gaze on her face, and, while his looks of melting tenderness lingered on every feature, and dwelt with tender curiosity and amazement on every lineament, he faintly exclaimed, "My child! my long-lost child!" then with a deep-drawn sigh caught her to his breast, and wept over her in silence: while Imogen, as if lost in sweet illusions of a

delightful dream, from which she dreaded to awake, mingled her tears with his.

Mean time the domestics gazed on the affecting scene in an amazement which for some minutes deprived them of the power of motion or of speech. The squire, who had been for twenty years the humble companion of the count de St. Dorval, looked earnestly at Imogen, and in a tone of recognition exclaimed: "Holy Mother! sure it is the countess herself;" while the count, who was now seated on a couch, pointed to Imogen, and, addressing the squire, in an affecting tone exclaimed: "*Richambaut*, hast thou ne'er seen a form and face like that?"

"Not, my lord," said the squire, "since I beheld the countess de St. Dorval."

"Behold her daughter!" said the count, with an air of mingled exultation and delight.

Richambaut fell at Imogen's feet, and respectfully kissed the trembling hand extended to raise him.

"Since I have lived to see this day," said the old man with tears, "I have lived long enough." Then with a delicacy that intimated no common mind he withdrew with the page, checking the ardent curiosity of his affectionate solicitude till the first flush of emotion had subsided in the bosom of his lord; of whose sufferings he had long been the witness, of whose transports he could well judge.

While Imogen, confused, bewildered, transported, hung on the shoulder of her father, the count, still gazing on her, seemed as if every sense was absorbed in the contemplation of her face and figure; then drawing her towards him he energetically exclaimed: "Oh! I could not be deceived; thy first glance sunk to my soul, and rekindled the sacred flame nature illumined in my heart, when in thy sainted mother's circling arms I first beheld thee, smiling like a seraph on her nurturing bosom! Thy first accents spoke to my heart in thy mother's well-remembered tones, and its ardent palpitation acknowledged thee her child, her long-lost, long-lamented child!" Then dropping on one knee, and raising the clasped hands of Imogen in his, he exclaimed in a tone

swful, affecting, and impressive: "Eternal disposer of the universe! receive the grateful offerings of two hearts, who, by the fatherly interposition of thy providential care, are restored to happiness and to each other." And while words of pious gratitude murmured on his quivering lips he embraced his kneeling child, raised her in his arms, and implored a blessing on her head.

The benediction of a father for the first time breathed on the ear and sunk to the heart of Imogen: she felt it was a *father* pronounced it, and felt she was his child. The various and powerful feelings of her agitated heart seemed to have reached their climax of emotion: she fixed her eyes on the count's face till they were glazed with tears; a convulsive laugh of ecstasy burst from her lips: "Then I have a father!" she wildly exclaimed, and sunk motionless, though not insensible, on his shoulder.

"You have, you have!" exclaimed the count, pressing her to his heart, while a warm tear fell on her cheek: that tear was the sweet cordial administered by nature, and the fading senses of Imogen revived to its influence.

"I have a father!" she repeated in a tone of firmness softened by delight; "and that precious tear is my assurance."

The hour which succeeded to those eventful, those precious moments already elapsed, was occupied in the indulgence of those poignant feelings description fails to reach, and the strongest powers of imagination but faintly conceives. Imogen, the long-deserted, alienated, friendless Imogen, whose heart had hitherto so long cherished those sweet and glowing affections, those tender and refined sensibilities, it was so eminently organized to feel, yet cherished them in vain; and who, rich in all those sensations that constitute the summit of human felicity, had hitherto lived isolated from their enjoyment, and, amidst the social blisses of creation, still wandered

"A solitary fly,

"Without a horde of sweets,"

now for the first time met a father's tender gaze, and heard herself claimed by the endearing title of *child*:

THE NOVICE OF

while the ardent feelings of the count (in whose bosom the warm affections still reared their unfaded heads, as though the chill breath of age had not sighed upon their freshness) revelled in the transporting conviction of having found a long-lamented and only child, the fair and blooming transcript of the idol of his youthful adoration, of the saint of his maturer homage; a saint, to whom his heart had erected a shrine where affliction still offered hourly tributes of tenderness and regret.

To the tide of emotion which at first overwhelmed the souls of the father and child, succeeded that ardent and mutual curiosity so natural to their situation. Imogen, though flurried beyond the power of perspicuous detail, briefly ran over the particulars of her life since consciousness first awakened in her mind amidst the dreary cloisters of St. Dominick. Her relation was indeed little more than an history of her sensations or ideas; for till within the last six months her life had been monotonous and unvaried, equally barren of incident and destitute of event. That part of it where her heart was most interested was the most eloquently touched on; and when she spoke of her connection with the canons, the virtues, the talents, the generosity of her friend, the spirit of friendship seemed to breathe inspiration on her detail, and gratitude shed her glowing tints on each trait of excellence memory delighted to reveal. The character of the lady Magdelaine and the friar were sportively sketched off with all those powers of comic delineation which betrayed the disposition of their possessor as not wholly inimical to

“Every scene of ridicule in things,”

when the playfulness of the happiest temperament was not clouded by the shadowy influence of care, distracted by the throes of suspense and anxiety: and her account of her situation at the chateau, and the authorship of her learned patroness, drew a smile to the lips of the count, whose pensive brow gradually resigned its compression to the influence of her cheering vivacity; while the eager attention with which he hung on her detail, seemed

touched with new interest as she dwelt on the character and friendship of the minor canoness of St. Dominick.

When she had concluded her interesting relation, over which she had shed those illuminations of mind the light of genius only emanates, and which the count, under the grateful consciousness of paternal pride, had delightedly noticed, he tenderly embraced her, and uttered a prayer of thankfulness to heaven, that in recovering a child, he had found her indued with that strength and cultivation of mind which is ever the best testimony of the virtues of the heart.

While on the bewitching graces which accompanied these invaluable possessions he was silent, but not unobserving, after a pause of some length the count said: "I must now, my beloved child, leave you for a short time. You have been brought a prisoner to this camp, and as such I stand accountable for you to our commander in chief. The young duke de Guise has lately joined his uncle, the duke de Mayenne: they are both my friends, and I have the honour to be collaterally connected with the duke by his mother's side, whose virtues and talents are the admiration of the world. I well know how deeply my illustrious friends will participate in my rapture, when I acquaint them that in my prisoner I have found my long-lost daughter: but lest the instinct of nature should but faintly corroborate the incoherent claim I have made to thee as such, take this key. On the table near the couch where you reposed last night, you will behold a small casket: it contains some papers relative to my life and thy birth. When amidst the gloom of midnight I have left my restless pillow, and soothed my sorrows by retracing them (sure beyond the sad indulgence of my own melancholy feelings) some sweet and secret intuition urged me to the mournful task, and my heart's faint hopes suggested that the tear of filial tenderness should bathe those woes paternal anguish had recorded."

CHAP. XIII.

Here's much to do with *hate*, but more with *love*.

SHAKESPEARE.

Ma del siu de la madre em pia fortuna
Pargoletto develse.

Sonetto de TORQUATTO TASSO.

As soon as the count had retired, Imogen, all eagerness, all hope, all emotion, flew to the casket. The first object that presented itself to her eye was the miniature of a beautiful female, whose strong resemblance to herself left no doubt that it was the picture of her mother; and the kiss her warm lip stamped upon it was bathed with tears of tenderness and regret. On the back of the gold which encased it was written, "Julia de Ribemont, countess de St. Dorval." "Then I am indeed the daughter of the count and countess de St. Dorval!" was the silent ejaculation of the tender but not unambitious heart of Imogen. She then took out a roll of manuscript, and eagerly began the perusal of the following

MEMOIRS.

Among the ancient nobility of Provence the barons *de Montargis* and the counts *de St. Dorval* held no subordinate rank. Equally high in the scale of dignity, power, and opulence, their equality produced those germs of competitorship which many unavoidable and many adventitious circumstances contributed to mature. Whether embroiled in domestic feuds or foreign contentions; whether, in the slumber of warfare, or the intervals of peace, they entered the ring, or jousted at the tournament; or whether amidst the social enjoyments of the public banquet or the privacy of retired life; still the powers of dissension, of hereditary hatred, opposed them to each other on the list of inveterate and irreconcilable enmity.

The Durance, whose blue waves bathed the rocky base of the chateau Montargis, reflected from the opposite shore the lofty turrets of St. Dorval. Ages had rolled

over the time-proof edifices of antiquity; and still they frown on each other in all the gloomy pride of rivalry, and still do they give to the eye of the beholder no faint emblem of that domestic animosity which has so long existed, and still subsists, between their respective families. The family de Montargis embraced the heresies of Luther in the reign of Henry the Second.* The counts de St. Dorval, at the same period, were active in their endeavours to check the innovation the schismatic spirit of the age was gradually introducing into the immutable system of their ancestors' holy faith. In a later day the barons de Montargis united with Catherine de Medicis, and afterwards with Henry of Navarre, in suppressing the League and crushing the house of Lorraine: the counts de St. Dorval in promoting the measures of the League and supporting the duke of Guise.† Thus religious distinction and political faction seemed united in their endeavours to sharpen the asperity of family feuds; but it remained for that passion, which should be the great solvent of every rancorous sentiment, to hurl the arrow of defiance at every hope of reconciliation; and love completed that structure of discord, of which hereditary, religious and political hatred had laid the foundation. Twenty years had elapsed since the present baron de Montargis and count de St. Dorval were in the prime of life. They were the only sons of two tender but ambitious fathers, who had not yet paid the debt of nature, and who instilled into the minds of their children those principles of dissension which had from infancy rankled in their own. The younger de Montargis was of a cold, phlegmatic, and gloomy character: the ambition of a great alliance had forced him into an early marriage, and he became a father and a widower in the very spring

* Henry the Second executed the edicts against the Hugonots with the utmost severity. He erected a chamber of prosecution, composed of members of the parliament; and at the coronation of his queen Catherine de Medicis was present at an *auto de fe* of obstinate Hugonots, which contributed, among the other nuptial festivities, to the amusement of the court.

† Head of the princes of Lorraine.

of life. On the death of his first lady, love suggested a second union; and Julia de Ribemont, a rich protestant heiress and the ward of his father, became his betrothed bride by the dying wishes of her parent. The lady de Ribemont was conducted to the chateau de Montargis previous to the celebration of their nuptials, and the two de Montargis's were only prevented from accompanying her by the political distraction which at that period agitated Paris.

Mean time the younger St. Dorval, adverse to the political intrigues in which his father was engaged at the metropolis, of a delicate constitution, and of a romantic and studious turn, wooed peace and the muses amidst the embowering shades of Provence; where every grove was sacred to the presiding deities of love and song, and breathed the spirit of the tutelar being to which they were consecrated. It was at this period a circumstance took place which produced the following letters.

Letter the first.

M. de St. Dorval to the lady Julia de Ribemont.

Suffer me, madam, to reject those elegant acknowledgments, as dangerous as they are unmerited. The spirit of benevolence irradiates your countenance, yet you talk of a common-place act of humanity in a light a being of inferior species only should consider it. If your looks, your air, your eyes, are truly illustrative of your mind, your sentiments should rise in the scale of refinement even beyond the conception of ordinary characters. Review, madam, the little incident once more which gave birth to your polite note of this morning; and, as the first indiscriminating flush of gratitude subsides, it will doubtless appear to you in a different point of view. Alone and solitary, I was rambling along the delicious shores of the Durance, when, from the beautiful harbour which fronts the portico of the chateau de Montargis, I beheld your little bark put off: my eye pursued its picturesque course; while its snowy sails unfurled to the breeze, its streamers glittering through the foliage of the intervening groves, it glided proudly o'er the wave, as if conscious of the precious treasure it

enshrined. The river's devious course had scarcely stolen it from my gaze, when suddenly the sultry air glowed with unsupportable ardour; dark red clouds hovered in the atmosphere, emitting from their massy points coruscations of flame, or bearing on their gloomy surface the lightning's vivid flash. The distant thunder rolled its profound echoes amidst the deep cavities of the surrounding rocks, and the presiding spirit of the storms seemed to brood its furies on the late glossy bosom of the Durancé: its waves swelled, became agitated, rose to the elevation of mountains, or sunk to the dark chasm of an abyss. Guided only by two youthful rowers, I beheld your boat vainly struggling with the rapidly-increasing horrors of the storm; and, amidst the wind's shrill squall, the faint cries of female distress met my ear. Accompanied by a few of my domestices, well skilled in the navigation of the river, I ventured into a light pleasure-boat, and had the good fortune to save yours, and conduct you in safety to shore. Eager only for your preservation, I did not consider whether it was to the chateau de Montargis or the chateau de St. Dorval I carried you. Chance directed it should be the latter; and to be candid, I trembled lest your silence and reserve should have been the effect of your having already inhaled that pernicious vapour the air of Montargis respires, and which seems to poison every mind it taints against the family of St. Dorval: but happily the evident depression of your spirits proceeded from the fatigue and apprehension you had sustained; and, to confess the truth, I am selfish enough to wish it did; for your condescension in suffering me to attend you and your companion home looked not like the effects of family prejudice: yet in you, who are so soon to become a lovely member of that family, such a prejudice might not be wholly unwarrantable. We are apt not only to excuse but adopt the errors of those we love; for love is a sophist, who preaches not to the reason, but to the heart; and all its weaknesses and all its passions are but too favourable to the subtlety of his arguments. How little the heart can answer for itself this letter betrays: I meant to have written a few lines, and have given you a volume: I will,

however, only add, that at the moment your too grateful and too flattering billet of this morning was put into my hands, I was on the point of making my personal enquiries for your health at the *chateau de Montargis*. I would not swear madam that you come not under the penal laws of Charlemagne on the score of sorcery; and that the sudden storm, with all its relative circumstances, was but the illusion of enchantment: for certainly nothing less than a *magic spell* could lure a son of the count de St. Dorval to the portals of the baron de Montargis. I struggle not against supernatural agency, I bow to the omnipotence of my beautiful enchantress, and only wait her command to pay those respects in person, with which I am the most humble and devoted of her servants.

ST. DORVAL.

Billet.

From M. de St. Dorval to the Lady Julia de Ribemont.

You are right, madam, the soul is of no sect, no party: it is, as you say, our passions and our prejudices, which give rise to our religious and political distinctions. You add, you have already dropt a tear to the dissensions, which have so long divided the families of Montargis and de St. Dorval: it is thus that angels deplore the self-created miseries of man; although exempt by the divinity of their nature from a sympathy of suffering. May thy sensible heart ne'er feel a woe, but what its compassion for the sufferings of others awakens! Circumstances prevent your receiving me this morning, but to-morrow — Why cannot time be annihilated till to-morrow? — Till to-morrow (what magical letters compose that little word!) and ever, I feel I am destined to be the most devoted of your servants.

ST. DORVAL.

Billet.

And have I spent some hours in the chateau de Montargis? and are they to be the happiest of my existence? Certainly they are, if you persist in your cruel resolve!

Not suffer me to see you again! Gracious heaven! why then suffer me to visit you at all? why permit me to listen to those accents which penetrate the soul; those sentiments which vibrate in unison with all its most re-

finest emotions; those lips so bashfully wise; those eyes so eloquent in silence? Am I then destined never again to listen to the voice of the charmer, 'charm she ever so wisely,' or acknowledge the fugitive and syren graces with which nature has adorned her more inestimable gifts? Perhaps, at this moment, the infant *Montargis* (happy urchin!) sports in your arms, and pleads with cherub smiles the cause of his absent father. Yet, though 'tis true the boy is *Love's loveliest emblem!* yet, oh fair Julia! construe one smile as the cold intercession in the favour of friendship: yes! let the infant boy of Montargis plead for St. Dorval; and St. Dorval will forget he is the son of the man it is his inheritance to hate; he will consider him only as the child of Julia's future adoption; as the child of Julia's future husband.—What a politician, even in love, is this Montargis, when in his absence he consigns his fascinating cherub to your care? With the perfections of this lovely infant ever before your eyes, will they not, by a natural association, lead your thoughts towards the father? happy, too happy de Montargis!

ST. DORVAL.

Billet.

A thousand blessings light on the seraph head of your young companion! You say he was playing in your arms when my supplicating note reached you, and that his smiles and caresses seemed intuitively to second my entreaties. I am all gratitude for your condescending acquiescence, even though obtained by the involuntary influence of the child of Montargis. Adieu! I shall wish away the hours till this evening.

ST. DORVAL.

Letter.

A few days are scarcely elapsed since a note from Julia would have communicated in its touch a thrill of rapture through my whole frame; yet with the intuitive apprehensions of love, I shuddered when I received your letter of this morning. Although the gravity and reserve with which I have been lately received might have taught

me to expect it, I hesitated to break the seal; and the blood which glowed in my veins as I kissed the lines so lately traced by you, froze with icy coldness round my heart as I perused them. You say you weep as you indite, and confess I taught those tears to flow: you deplore your fatal indulgence to my wishes, yet blame me as the efficient cause of your imprudence. Oh Julia! you are the arbitress of your own destiny, and your misery or happiness depends solely on yourself. Awaken then from that slumber of the mind into which the timidity of your nature has lulled you. Remember that you are imprudent only according to the circumstances which may govern your future life; that that father which promised your hand held no power over your heart; that to bestow that hand when the affections are withheld will not be prudent but criminal; that though by a parent's will the forfeiture of your rich possessions follows the breach of that contract your heart never subscribed to, you are still left mistress of your person and your actions. Oh Julia, I have now but one other argument to suggest, and then I shall be silent for ever!

The son, the only son, of the count de St. Dorval, heir to an hereditary hatred to the house of Montargis, and stimulated by many personal aggravations to nourish that aversion, imbibed almost with maternal nurture, has sacrificed his justly-founded hatred, personal dislike, political and religious sentiments, his resentment, his prudence, and his pride, at the feet of Julia de Ribemont: all, all have vanished to the glance of her eye, to the sound of her voice, and St. Dorval, the once proud and haughty St. Dorval, has meanly and clandestinely stolen through the forbidden portals of Montargis, which for ages have been barred against his family, which still but for their master's absence would have been closed against himself, only to catch one smile from the lip of Julia, one glance of soft encouragement from her eye! Such, oh Love, is thy omnipotence! But why delineate to Julia the feelings of a heart whose every vibration she is already mistress of? It is true I have

hitherto been silent, and Julia has been—Oh heavens! her infatuating modesty, her timid reserve, her refined and elevated delicacy, even when caution closed the eye, and when prudence slumbered, breathed the vestal soul of sublime and immaculate purity itself; and when even the remembrance of her beauty's transient flower, her lively wit's bewitching blandishment, her youthful form's fresh fascinating graces, shall fade in the lapse of time, those sweet attributes of feminine perfection shall live in my heart's fond recollection till that heart shall cease to be Julia's, shall cease to throb with life! Yes, Julia, in spite of your silence and reserve, you know you are beloved; and oh! if my heart has not deceitfully construed in my favour those sweet compliances I have read in thy full blue eyes, those sudden blushes that warmed thy cheek at my appearance, that touching pensive air which softly ushered in my loitering departure, Julia's heart beats with no languid pulse for St. Dorval. The emotions which pursue this (perhaps chimerical but blissful) conviction baffle description; they overpower, they overwhelm me. I will not, dare not, add another line, save that in which I entreat you will suffer me to see you an hour before sunset this evening on the west rampart of Montargis. Oh Julia, Julia! you will not, must not refuse this last request of him who only holds his existence from your hands.

ST. DORVAL.

Letter.

M. de St. Dorval to the Chevalier de Sorville, at Paris.

Villa de Fiora, Tuscany:

Your letter has followed me here: I dare not dwell on its contents: its arguments are unanswerable, for they are the vigorous offspring of that *mens conscia rectis* which, amidst the trials of your chequered life, and the vicissitudes of your sensible heart, has never deserted you. It is in you alone we trace the sanguine virtues of youth united to the wisdom of age and the cautious prudence of experience. It is for you only, great and amiable philanthropist! to subdue the agonized throbbing

of your own lacerated heart, to alleviate the sorrows or rectify the errors of your friend. But it is now too late. Julia de Ribemont is mine by every tie human and divine. She has flown from a world unworthy of her: she has lost perhaps the languid approbation of the prejudiced, the pity of the ignorant, and forfeited those possessions for which alone the unfeeling de Montargis sought her alliance: but she has bestowed on your friend an inexhaustible mine of felicity, and participates in all the happiness she confers. Let then my inexorable father renew his unnatural and cruel vow, which casts me for ever an alien from his love: let my enemies triumph in the defeat of my prudence and the downfall of my pride: Julia de Ribemont is mine! that sweet conviction fills my whole heart, nor leaves one avenue open to regret.

That I have stolen a portionless wife from the family of Montargis, you tell me, is not the main object of my father's implacable resentment; but that in wedding a Hugonot, this unfortunate union may give birth to a race of heretics, whose apostacy shall cast an indelible stain on the uncontaminated faith of the house of St. Dorval, and forfeit the religious as well as the political principles of their ancestors, incessantly harrows his mind, and aggravates resentment beyond the power of reconciliation. Oh, de Sorville, how little does he know of the liberal, the noble-minded Julia! She already has no will but her husband's; and if her faith is founded on error, it is at least free from that pharisaical zeal and stubborn bigotry which the conscious infallibility of ours inspires. The ardour of your friendship certainly misleads you, when you wish me to appear in the presence of my father ere the first flush of his anger has yet subsided. Time is the best soother of those irritations which flow rather from the passions than the reason. In the interim, add to all I already owe you by remaining with my father, and supplying to him that place his undutiful but still affectionate son has forfeited. You are his nearest relation; your influence over him was once only second to mine, and now reigns unrivalled. You, who have lost a *Rosalie de Villette*, can have no tie to attach you to the

world but the benefit it may derive from your example and exertions. Oh! in every thing my superior but in years, I place my destiny in your hands: steal me again into my father's heart, and rescue the brilliant felicity I enjoy from those hovering shades with which the consciousness of filial ingratitude may at a future period obscure it.

I cannot dismiss this letter without giving you some slight sketch of our present situation. The villa de Fiora is the only inheritance I possess independent of my father. Even the diversified and beautiful landscapes of Provence can give you but a faint idea of the glowing charms of Tuscan scenery; nor does Italy present to the gaze of tasteful admiration a spot more luxuriant in beauty than the villa de Fiora. In this sweet retreat, imparadised in bliss, secluded from the world, its cares, its prejudices, lost to every reflection of the past, to every anxiety for the future; for three months, three fleet and rapturous months, the finger of smiling felicity daily wove such hours of bliss in the web of our existence as fancy's bright idea gives to the heavenly, to the pure and subtle joys of Elysium. Oh! how describe that crisis of bliss, where the full heart is insensible to a want; that union of soul which sympathy, friendship, esteem, and passion, inviolably confirm; that soft delirium of the senses which communicates the charm of love to every object around us, and represents them to the eye under a new and more delightful aspect than reality confers? I will not attempt to delineate what you have felt and I still enjoy. May they again be yours; and may some other Rosalie de Villette, fair, lovely, and excellent as her you have lost, awaken you to a repetition of those exquisite feelings which are now, in the most extensive and refined sense, the possession of your friend. Adieu!

ST. DORVAL.

I had almost forgot to mention a singular circumstance. *Stephano*, my father's Spanish servant, and who has ever stood so high in his favour, has had a dispute with his lord, which has caused their separation; and he has followed me to Italy, to seek an asylum in my little

establishment. He supplicated me with tears in his eyes to receive him; and, as I remember him from my infancy, I could not refuse his request, which was seconded by the seducing intercession of my sweet Julia; yet I know the fellow to possess all the gloom and bigotry which generally characterises his countrymen.

From the period in which this letter was written something more than a year fled away in the enjoyment of every social delight. A lovely infant became a new ligament in the indissoluble tie which bound the two fondest of all human hearts; and in the sweet and sacred character of a mother, madame de St. Dorval shone with new lustre in the eyes of the father, the husband, and the lover. Mean time neither the soothing suggestions of natural affection, nor the never-ceasing intercession of the chevalier de Sorville, could soften the asperity with which the prejudices of the count St. Dorval regarded the conduct of his son, whom he had formally deprived by will of all the law permitted to be withheld.

The old baron de Montargis was in the interim killed in an affray at Paris; and his son, in full possession of the forfeited estates of the heiress de Ribemont, publicly laughed at the romance of his successful and disinterested rival, and secretly nourished a hope of revenge, which he soon found an opportunity to display, though not wholly to accomplish. High in favour with Charles the Ninth, although a rigid Hugonot, he found means of insinuating a report to the royal ear prejudicial to the loyalty of the house de St. Dorval. His son's absence left the old count to stand the brunt of an accusation, which not even the suspicious tyranny of Charles could validate. This circumstance occasioned a rencontre between the count and the baron de Montargis, in which the former was slightly wounded. The report reached the ears of the younger de St. Dorval, and for the first time since his marriage contrition smote his heart. It was in vain he would have concealed from himself that his conduct had irritated de Montargis to the base revenge he had sought; a revenge that exposed his father

to the ignominy of a public accusation; that while this venerable father exposed his life in defence of his honour with youthful ardour, his son, amidst the soft and syren scenes of Italy, lapt in love's Elysium, and wholly resigned to rapturous indolence, passed his youthful days amidst the inglorious joys of peace and love.

Even the blandishments of his beautiful wife, the infant caresses of his lovely daughter, failed to awaken one thrill of rapture in a heart where remorse sat brooding over the keen complaints of conscience. It was at this period a letter arrived from the chevalier de Sorville, his best and only friend, which finally determined him on a step he had long meditated.

"Your father," said the chevalier, "after having recovered his wound, and arrived from Paris at the chateau de St. Dorval in tolerable health and spirits, was seized with a paralytic stroke. This is the second he has had since your marriage; a third is to be feared, and will leave no hopes of his recovery. Need I add more to induce you instantly to set off for France? Madame St. Dorval will join her seducing entreaties to mine, and assist in restoring you to your father. I have only to add, that the baron de Montargis has obtained the government of a northern province, and has left his young son to be educated at the chateau de Montargis, to court the return of that popularity his father has justly forfeited."

"Go," said madame St. Dorval, throwing herself into her husband's arms, when she had read this letter; "go, and complete the happiness you have begun: go, restore yourself to your father's heart, and heal the only wound that rankles in that of Julia."

The next morning St. Dorval set out for France: he parted from his wife and child, and parted with happiness for ever! On his arrival at Provence he found the inhabitants of the chateau St. Dorval overwhelmed with consternation and sorrow.

"It is in vain to conceal it from you," said the chevalier de Sorville, embracing him; "your father has just breathed his last." St. Dorval sunk lifeless into those arms which strained him to the noblest heart that ever throbbed in a human breast.

It was not till some days after the interment of the count's remains, and until the first flow of that filial affection which remorse sharpened to insupportable agony in the breast of his son had subsided, that the will of the late count was opened, in the midst of a numerous assembly. The count St. Dorval and his friend the chevalier de Sorville alone testified no surprise on finding that the late lord of St. Dorval had left nothing to his son but that patrimony of which he could not deprive him; and that the estate brought into the family by his alliance with his lady (one of the richest heiresses in France,) together with vast personal possessions, were bequeathed to the chevalier de Sorville.

The chevalier, approaching the notary, who read the will aloud, took it into his own hands, and, having looked it slightly over, tore it into a thousand pieces. "Thus perish," said he firmly, "the unjust instrument of parental displeasure, framed under the immediate operation of prejudice and passion! Had the count lived to recover his perfect senses, which the nature of his disorder deprived him of so long before his death, thus would it have perished by his hands." Then throwing himself into the arms of St. Dorval, he added in a tone of affectionate elation, "Long may the count of St. Dorval live to enjoy the ancient possessions of his illustrious ancestors!"

St. Dorval had a heart to feel as profoundly the generosity of his friend, as that inestimable friend had a soul capable of every act that raises humanity even above itself. In return for all he had voluntarily relinquished, the chevalier was with difficulty prevailed on to accept St. Dorval's Tuscan estate, although extremely limited in an income which was rather the patrimony of the distressed than his own.

After some time spent in necessary arrangement, the count and his friend set off for Italy, to conduct the countess and her daughter back to France. The count had not acquainted his wife with his departure from France; and his heart fondly sketched the idea of his unexpected return to Julia with all the delicate ardour of a lover, with all the more homefelt satisfaction of a hus-

band. An absence of nearly two months had revived those fading flowers of passion which drooped beneath the ardour of unclouded possession; and, distant from the object of his idolatry, fancy shed those divine attractions round her surpassing even the sweet reality of her own perfections. The soft feelings of a father ameliorated the ardent enthusiasm of the lover, and a thousand hearts swelled in the bosom of St. Dorval when he arrived within view of the groves of de Fiora. Leaving his friend in the carriage, he mounted a swift horse, and proceeded (or rather fled) alone to the villa; jealous even that the eye of friendship should witness the sacred effusions of his enamoured heart, that beat with feverish violence. As he fastened his horse to a tree at the end of the avenue which led to the house, and while his eager eye flung round on every side its quick enquiring glance, in fond expectation of lighting on the precious objects it sought, his trembling limbs scarce bore him to the portico: but Julia and her child reposed not beneath its marble shade, as they were wont in the meridian hour. When St. Dorval reached it, it was filled with domestics, who fled with horror and amazement at their master's sight: at the same moment four strangers passed on, bearing a coffin on their shoulders; and Stephano, the Spaniard who followed it, caught the lifeless form of St. Dorval in his arms. The fears of St. Dorval were not the phantoms of an anxious tender heart—Julia was no more!

The return of reason brought with it all the agony of unutterable woe. St. Dorval burst from the arms of de Sorville (who shed those tears the dry and inflamed eye of his friend could not weep), and, with a frenzy that mocked the power of restraint, fled instinctively to Julia's apartment. The bed was hung with black, and covered with a pall: beside it lay the cradle of her infant; the veil which was flung over it was that which Julia wore when St. Dorval last strained her to his heart. St. Dorval snatched it away, but it covered not the form of his child. He called alternately on the names of Julia and her daughter: no lisping murmur, no melting voice of tenderness, answered to the frantic enquiries of the hus-

band and the father. The image of despair in its gloomiest aspect, St. Dorval clasped his hands, and seated himself on Julia's bed.

It was in that dreadful moment, when every feeling of his heart was wound up to the last strain of suffering; when conviction of the loss he had sustained touched the nerve of soul-felt sorrow even to the very quick; when his wildly throbbing temples shot pangs of anguish through his burning brain, and his glaring eye and flushing cheek felt not the refreshing dew of one heart-easing tear; it was in that dreadful moment, when the blackest horrors of despair succeeded to the liveliest, sweetest hopes of love and rapture, that the chevalier de Sorville sought to soften the silent stubborn sorrows of his friend by relating the melancholy cause which had awakened them. He read aloud the following letters, which were on the point of being dispatched to St. Dorval when he arrived at the villa de Fiora.

*Fragment of a Journal from Madame to M. de St.
Dorval.*

Were I to tell thee at what hour in the twenty-four I miss thee most, it would be in the decline of evening, that sweet solemn season so dear to the pensive pleasures of the heart, so consonant to the tone of our minds and feelings, when day and night seem to struggle for that empire twilight has usurped; when the western star sheds his pale light on the deep blue of the cloudless atmosphere, and the sun's last fading blush still glows on the purple mists of evening. 'Tis then, solitary and alone, I wander to those luxuriant shades where in the decline of a beautiful day we used to repose. Fancy animated by tenderness and regret touches every object with the idea of my absent love: in every sighing breeze I hear the voice of St. Dorval, and a soft recollection of my husband steals on me from the view of every object. I weep, but my tears are not ungracious; and I return home, and court that repose which lures to my pillow the soft dream that gives me back St. Dorval and mocks the power of absence. It will gladden thy fond heart to hear that some new intelligence daily beams on the se-

raph countenance of our little Imogen; and I almost expect to hear her cherub mouth pronounce the name of mother. Oh, what a joy were that to the mother's dotting heart! She almost springs from her nurse's arms to mine, and with that eager look of joy her father's speaking eye so often emanates. 'Mayst thou,' said I this morning, 'resemble thy father in virtue as in person!' The precious infant clung to my bosom, and seemed to smile assurance to my prayer.

To-day, as I spread my trinkets before her, she seized on the agate cross that was once thy sainted mother's (which you prize more from that circumstance than its intrinsic value), and held it so fast that Ursuline, who is a right pious catholic, insisted on tying it round her neck; and so it has become the little monopolizer's property. Stephano, who was arranging a flower-vase at the time, looked on with marked expression in his eye at the transaction: doubtless he thought it boded well of the future piety of our infant, in spite of her mother's heresy. You know his bigotry; yet he is a faithful soul, and officiously attentive in your absence. I have sat in the portico all day, watching the expected arrival of your courier, and have now returned to my own room to chide you for your inattention. Three long, long weeks, and no letter for Julia! That you may have received my packet! My heart can well judge of the anxiety of yours by that with which it is agitated at this moment. My spirits are wretchedly depressed; and without any immediate cause, my tears fall faster than I can write. I will invoke the talismanic power of my sweet infant's smiles: at this moment I hear her sporting in Ursuline's arms beneath the casement. Adieu, my love! A sweet evening succeeds to an oppressive and sultry day: I am going to join our little girl, and dissipate by a ramble the gloomy visions that crowd on my heart. Adieu!

In continuation, by one of Madame St. Dorval's women.

Monseigneur,

When the countess arose from her escrutoire I gave her her veil, and she joined the nurse and child in the

lawn. Near two hours had elapsed, when the countess returned alone. We were all surprised at her having kept the lady Imogen out in the evening air to so late an hour. The countess complained of extreme fatigue, and retired to her room: when she had undressed she went, as she was wont to do before she retired to rest, to visit the nursery; but neither the infant nor Ursuline were there! This was the more astonishing, as the countess had sent the child home early in the evening, and had rambled alone in the orangery. When enquiries were made, it was found that neither Ursuline nor the infant had returned. Although it was night, and a heavy rain began to fall, the countess, followed by some of her domestics (while others set out in different directions), flew to the spot where she had parted with her child. It was near the skirts of the wood which runs to the rear of the villa; and at no great distance farther up in the wood, fastened by ropes to a tree, and exhausted with crying, they found Ursuline. She had been seized on by two men after she had parted from my lady: one held a pistol to her breast, while the other carried away the infant. The man who held her then bound her arms to a tree, and she had remained for more than an hour and a half in that situation. The countess retained her senses till she heard the melancholy detail, and then fell lifeless in the arms of her attendants. She was carried home; her garments were drenched with rain, as was her fine hair, for she ran out in her night dress, and without any covering on her head. It was generally believed that some robbers who lurked in the woods had carried off the infant for the sake of the jewels which it was my lady's pleasure to deck her in. For two days every search was made. Stephano, who took it much to heart, scoured the country night and day; and the count de Morino made every exertion, but to no purpose.

Mean time a delirious fever seized on my lady, partly occasioned by the anguish of her mind, and partly by the dreadful cold she had caught on the fatal night when the child was stolen. She raved incessantly of her infant: it was impossible to prevail on her to go to bed: she wandered frantically about the house, and sometimes rambled

out in the night air to the spot where she had parted with her child, while the fever raged in her veins. After five days thus spent her strength was exhausted, and she suffered us to convey her to her apartment; but in passing near the nursery, she shrieked and flew to the cradle of her child: from this object it was impossible to part her; it was therefore carried into her room and placed by her bedside. Then she took off her veil, threw it over the cradle, and, seating herself by it, sung that sweet melancholy lullaby with which she was wont to lull the lady Imogen to repose. Sometimes she would gently raise the veil, and with a melancholy smile softly exclaim, "She sleeps!" then rock the cradle and sing again. In this manner she passed the night: towards morning knelt down, and, laying her head on the cradle, appeared to fall into a deep sleep—from whence she awoke no more!

Here oblivion drops the veil, and shades the expression of those woes which fancy dares not delineate, which memory dares not dwell upon.

The count of St. Dorval's sudden loss of father, wife, and child, with all their aggravating circumstances, was too much for the tenderness of his heart or the strength of his mind: the former sunk beneath reiterated anguish; the latter gave way to the torrent of affliction that overwhelmed it. Amidst the general wreck reason was dispossessed of her empire, and for two years her light beamed no ray on the darkened soul of St. Dorval.

In the first moment of his recovered senses he recommenced that hopeless search for his child which the chevalier de Sorville had continued with unabated ardour: hope still mocked him in the pursuit, and to the agony of suspense the horrors of irrevocable certainty at last succeeded. Many a year since has rolled in gloom over the devoted head of St. Dorval, and brought in its course no beam of hope to illumine his dark fate. The retribution of heaven has fallen heavy on his heart; and till the last sad remnant of life he will continue to expiate that one act of filial disobedience from whence all his after sorrows flowed.

CHAP. XIV.

— Discretion hath so far fought with nature,
That he with wisest sorrow thinks on her,
Together with remembrance of himself.

SHAKSPEARE.

WITH the profoundest interest, the most eager curiosity, and breathless haste, Imogen perused the manuscript: and even when she had finished it, her eye still recurred to the letter written in her mother's hand, dictated by her mother's heart; while the fondness of fancy was willing to believe that the tear which fell to the memory of that sainted mother bathed those lines long since imbued with the precious dew of maternal delight. "Yes," said Imogen, "dear and tender mother! you were hastening to bless me with a last embrace when your hand traced the last affectionate sentiment: my infant accents then reached your delighted ears, and the smiles you hastened to invoke already breathed fresh spirit on thy sinking heart. And it was for me you died!" exclaimed Imogen, sobbing over the letter and pressing it to her lips. At that moment the count entered. Imogen arose, and threw herself into his arms: the count pressed her to his heart: silent was the indulgence of their emotions; tears, sighs, and mutual caresses, were the language of their hearts.

When they were seated, and their emotion had in some degree subsided, the count addressed his daughter. "These papers, my sweet child," said he, pointing to the manuscript, "which I have collated and connected together as well as the unsettled state of my mind would admit, contain the history of the most interesting and eventful period of my life: what has since followed is little more than a blank. Six years after the death of your mother, I embraced a military life. It was a letter from the late illustrious duke de Guise that roused me from the lethargy of despair. At a period when every gentleman in France embraced the party consonant to his principles, I recollected that I was the last of the noble house of St. Dorval; and, determined that the fading spirit of my

family should emit one spark ere it became totally extinct, and expire in a flame not unworthy of its ancient fire, I headed a numerous body of my vassals, and joined the duke de Guise at —. The prince, and his brother the cardinal de Guise, were inhumanly and traiterously murdered by Henry the Third. The misfortunes of that illustrious family attached me more firmly to its interest; and I had the happiness to be instrumental in the escape of the young duke de Guise, imprisoned by the king on the murder of his father and uncle.*

" Amidst the harrassing cares of a military life, I have sought to bury the recollection of my domestic misfortunes, and to forget the corroding sorrows of a broken heart. The lapse of seventeen years has ameliorated the asperity of affliction; and the recovery of my child, under the merciful providence of heaven, will, I trust, breathe fresh vigour on the long-fading springs of life, and give me yet a little longer to a world which now begins to wear the aspect of long-banished joy to my eye. Yet though my heart confirms thee mine by all the sweet intuitions of nature, by the spirit of thy mother which breathes in thy accents, by that wondrous resemblance of form which restores her to my view as when first I beheld her lovely and blooming amidst the embowering shades of Montargis; and though that mark on thy cheek, that cross on thy bosom, are proofs irrefragable that thou art indeed my child, my sainted Julia's child; yet still my heart languishes with curiosity to penetrate the veil of mystery that has so long concealed thee from my view. That you were forced from your nurse's arms by robbers, lured to the barbarous act by the value of thy ornaments, I entertain no doubt; but that they should have preserved thy life, and carried thee from Tuscany to the convent of St. Dominick in Champagne, is a mystery past solving. Oh, my sweet Ime-

* He was confined in the castle of *Tours*, and in 1591 contrived to effect his escape by the assistance of his valet-de-chambre, who amused his guard while he got into a small boat, anchored beneath his casement. At the other side of the river he was received by some of his most intimate friends, who waited there with horses.—See Gayet, vol. ii, book 3.

gen! when scarce a week past I visited the convent of St. Dominick with my friend de Sorville, could I then have known that its walls probably enclosed my long-sought child!"

"Gracious heaven! my father! You visit St. Dominick, and but a week back!" exclaimed Imogen, recalling the emotion with which the count had first heard her mention the convent.

"Didst thou not hear of the arrival of two strangers, who spent some time at the convent, on the day the sister Pasiphaë died?"

"I did," said Imogen; "they came with a dispensation from the pope to enable the canoness to seek for health in a climate more genial to her shattered constitution: but oh! they came too late!"

"Those strangers, Imogen, were de Sorville and your father."

"Gracious God! my father!"

"The canoness," continued the count, "was a woman of strong understanding, but the strength of her passion was proportioned to that of her mind. Her love for the chevalier became a part of her existence: neither philosophy nor religion were equal to its subjugation; she cherished it in madness and in reason, in the world and amidst a convent's chilling gloom: it survived the wreck of hope, and baffled the oblivious spell of time. Not so de Sorville: he loved not less tenderly than his mistress, but the influence of reason was even stronger than that of love over his mind: he did not blindly resign himself to the infatuation of a first passion, and pursue its indulgence beyond the line of possibility; his thwarted affection gradually moderated into a tender interest and inviolable friendship for its once-adored object. He wrote to her, and his letters were fraught with the soothing attentions of humanity, the suggestions of reason, religion, and philosophy. Rosalie's answers breathed only the soul of passion, animated, not restrained, by opposition. He ceased to write, and strove by silence to subdue the energy of stubborn love in the bosom of the canoness. Her pride took the alarm, but her health became the victim of her feelings. Mean time the chevalier con-

tinued single, and lived the friend of mankind, the benefactor of society; of no party in politics, of no sect in religion, he is at once patriotic, loyal, and devout. His principles are not indeed truly consonant to the present state of society; and his Utopian system, his love of civil and religious liberty, is rather a beautiful than a practicable theory: yet even his errors are amiable, for they are the errors of a man too good for the world he lives in. Although his home was the villa de Fiora in Tuscany, the activity of his mind seldom suffered him to remain for any time its inhabitant; and the tender and lively interest he still felt for the sister Pasiphaë led him twice in the year to the chateau de Rosemont, from whence his sister procured him intelligence of the long-declining canoness. It was in his last visit he learnt from the physician of the convent that the canoness had no hope of life but from change of air. At his desire I applied to the duke de Mayenne; and through his interest at the court of Rome procured a dispensation from his holiness, enabling the nun to visit Marseilles, her native place.

"I obtained leave to quit the camp, and accompanied him to the convent of St. Dominick; and we arrived there a few hours after her death. My duty obliged me to return to the camp. The chevalier loitered a day or two in the neighbourhood, and then returned to de Rosemont, where he still remains."

"Then it is certain," said Imogen, "I have beheld this great and amiable friend; and had my last visit to the convent been an hour earlier, might have beheld him who now suffers me to call him father." She then related her adventure in the aisle of St. Dominick, on the night of the canoness's interment; and the count readily agreed with her, that the mysterious visitor was no other than the chevalier de Sorville.

"I knew," said he, "he meant to pay the last sad duty to his departed friend; and it is perfectly consonant to the delicacy of his character, that he should wish to indulge the luxury of sorrow unperceived, and escape the prying eye of vulgar observation: this melancholy and

reserve is the true indication of that silent, sullen grief, which profound refined feeling only nourishes."

The count then changed the conversation, to a topic more immediately consonant to their respective interests. "If," said he, "in a moment such as this, when heaven has granted to my wishes all they panted after on earth, one repining thought could disturb my present felicity; that thought of regret should be, that I am necessitated to suffer you, my beloved child, to remain one moment in a place and situation so every way improper for you: and though the delight of beholding and conversing with thee, supersedes in the father's heart every other sentiment, yet I hope, on this and every future occasion, he will always have the fortitude to sacrifice his own gratification to thy happiness. It is indeed true, a father's arms are a child's best asylum: yet the uncertain and hazardous situation in which I am now placed, renders that asylum of a doubtful continuance; and a residence in a camp is as little consonant to female delicacy, as it is unsafe and incommodious. Deprived of all female attendance, except such as it were infinitely better to want; without even a female dress, a want so frequently betrayed by those rising blushes, which so eloquently portray the wounded feelings of violated modesty; nothing can be less consonant to propriety than thy further residence here, even though that residence were a certain one, and thy father's protection sure and permanent as it is now doubtful and unstable: for in the breast of a man of honour, no private claims, or selfish feelings, can oppose themselves to the duty he owes society; and even though I still retained my sweet Imogen amidst the tumults of a camp, the affections of the father must still be subservient to the soldier's duties. I have only to add, that in acquainting the duke de Guise with the circumstances of my child's recovery, he has, with his usual goodness, anticipated my wishes; and offered me the protection of his mother, who now resides, with her accomplished daughter,* at Guise; until his cause, no

* *Louisa de Lorraine, afterwards princess de Conti.*

longer calling for thy father's weak support, shall enable him again to claim the precious deposit, and retire with his treasure to the shades of St. Dorval."

"Alas!" said Imogen tenderly, "hast thou not said, a father's arms are a child's best asylum? Yet, if I must so soon resign this late-found, dear asylum, why not seek the protection of the chevalier de Sorville's sister, madame de Rosemont, to whom the friendship of the minor canoness had already consigned me?"

"Because," said the count gravely, "a situation which might have been eligible for the fugitive Novice of St. Dominick, would be highly improper for the daughter of the count de St. Dorval. Madame de Rosemont, it is true, is amiable: yet in becoming an apostate to the religion of her ancestors, she did not, like her brother, embrace the mild principles of universal toleration; she is a rigid Hugonot. Her husband, of the same persuasion, died at the battle of Ivry by the side of the king of Navarre, whose strenuous partizan he was. Since that period the chateau de Rosemont has been an asylum to the enemies of the house de Guise and the catholic faith: to such an asylum shall the count de St. Dorval commit his daughter; he who is the avowed friend of the former, who would die in defence of the latter? Besides, the proudest ambition of my soul, the tenderest anxiety of my heart, could not select for thee a protectress more worthy of becoming such, than the duchess de Guise.* Not more eminent for the qualities of heart and understanding, than celebrated for her refined and attic taste, her polished and interesting manners, this superior and extraordinary woman unites all that is great and noble in our sex, with all that is excellent and amiable in her own. With courage to oppose adversity even in its most dreadful form, with grandeur of soul to sustain undazzled the splendour of the most brilliant prosperity, her character is formed of the happiest elements; and her great, her superior qualities, are so blended with all the soft and pleasing attractions, that while she excites

* For an account of the celebrated duchess de Guise, see *Memoires de Sully*; and Bayle's Dictionary, article *Guise*.

our reverence even to awe, she wins our love and secures our esteem. It is to this illustrious princess, the boast of her country, the idol of her friends, and even the admiration of her enemies, that I would consign my Imogen, my child; until that happy period when I shall be enabled to claim her, to part no more."

The heart of Imogen, ever emulous of superiority, equally ambitious of virtue and of genius, swelled in her bosom, as her father pronounced the eulogium of the duchess de Guise.

"Yes," said she with a sigh, "I will leave you, my father; let me not murmur at the first command a parent's wish imposes. Yes, send me to this incomparable woman: with such a model in my view, perhaps I may catch some of that excellence by which I shall become more worthy of being thy child."

The count tenderly pressed the hand clasped in his. "Continue but thyself," said he; "lose not the modest blush that mantles on thy cheek; let not that source dry up which sends the tear of feeling to thine eye, the smile of rapture to thy lip, the sacred source of sensibility. Seek not to imitate, but to improve, even to perfection, the excellencies of thy nature; and thy father's heart desires no more."

The count then mentioned, that a courier, which the duke de Guise was dispatching under escort to his mother, took to the duchess a letter of recommendation from her son in favour of Imogen; and that nothing remained but to procure leave from the commander in chief to accompany her himself to Guise. "I am now obliged," said he, "to attend a council of war, which is to be held in his tent; I shall then seize the most favourable occasion of preferring my request."——

"And heaven send it may be granted!" said Imogen eagerly: "for to confess the truth, my lord, my late adventures have rather increased my timidity than added to my courage; it is in your presence only I feel that guardian safety so long denied me."

"May your father long have it in his power to afford it thee!" said the count, rising: then telling her that

she might expect him back in less than an hour, he adjourned to the tent of the duke de Mayenne.

This hour was spent by Imogen in a variety of reflections, of which her father was the principal subject. Endowed by nature with that all-pervading, all-penetrating apprehension, which mocks even the partial bias of affection, and pierces the veil in which the solicitude of tenderness shrouds the failings of its object; neither the strong sympathy which apparently existed between her father's character and her own, the prepossessing urbanity of his manners, nor that fond partiality which the connection subsisting between them was alone sufficient to inspire, could conceal from Imogen that many an error of education, many a prejudice of party and of religious growth, were associated with the best principles of his mind, and shed their poison on the best feelings of his heart. She could not but recollect, that in his little biographical sketch of himself, the sect he professed was always mentioned as the only true and infallible religion; that with equal tenacity he adhered to the supposed justice of the cause he had embraced, rather from hereditary principle than the conviction of reason; that he had mentioned the sublime, the philanthropic sentiments of the chevalier de Sorville, as a beautiful rather than a practicable theory; and that the friendship of his sister was rejected, because she was a *Hugonot*, and afforded a charitable asylum to the unfortunate of the same persuasion! Yet, even with all these errors of the mind, Imogen worshipped the still warm and tender sensibility of her father's heart; the still surviving enthusiasm of his character; the apparent gentleness of his disposition; and that mild benevolence, which, superior to prejudice, shone in his open countenance, as if eager to volunteer in the service of humanity, independent of every political and religious distinction: but what her heart most lamented, was the tie which bound him to a party whose unstable foundation was fast falling to decay.

Of the hereditary and lineal claims of Henry IV, to the throne of France, her historical knowledge had furnished her with sufficient and undeniable proofs; and the amiable, the magnanimous character of the monarch,

had long awakened a personal interest in his favour, in a heart which swelled at the splendid feats of the hero, and melted in all the sympathy of kindred virtue over the milder perfections of the man. She was not, however, sufficiently acquainted with her father's character, to dare to combat its prejudices.

While she yet dwelt on them with tenderness and regret, the count entered the tent : he was followed by a subaltern, to whom he was busied in giving some professional instructions. Meanwhile the domestics spread a table with more elegant and luxurious fare than a flying camp might be supposed to afford. The story of the count's discovery of his daughter in his prisoner, had obtained a pretty general circulation through the camp : and excited a general interest, which the count's domestics particularly displayed by the curiosity, tempered only by respect, with which they regarded their young mistress ; who, though wrapt up in the minstrel's graceful robe, so as scarcely to betray what modesty herself might proudly reveal, blushed at the unseemly habit which disguised the feminine form of its lovely wearer. The count's delicacy awaked to the influence of his daughter's ; he dismissed the attendants, and they sat down to the table with only a page in waiting. An air of dejection and reserve seemed diffused over the manners of the count, which equally intimidated Imogen from enquiring into their cause, or demanding the success of his request. Her father spoke little, and ate less ; and, when the dinner service was removed, he arose from the table and threw himself on a couch. Thither Imogen followed ; and seating herself beside him, with that air of timid softness that feared to be intrusive, yet languished to alleviate the melancholy it witnessed, she exerted with gradual increase all those soothing arts, whose witchcraft steals sorrow from itself, and winds round the heart with imperceptible power : but as she faintly endeavoured to rally back the retreating spirits of her father by the affected vivacity of her own, in the smile of sadness that repaid her obvious and tender endeavours, Imogen traced their inefficacy.

"And must I part from thee?" said the count, after a long pause, gazing on her through tears of fondness.

"But for a short time I hope, dearest sir," said Imogen with a smile and a sigh.

"God grant!" said the count fervently.

"Oh! he will, he will!" said Imogen with animation; "he whose goodness has thus providentially restored thee to thy child, will still preserve her to thee: and trust me *my* heart's forebodings are light and pleasant; they whisper hope and happiness to my soul, and revel in the fond anticipation of a speedy and indissoluble reunion."

The kiss which she impressed on her father's hand, seemed to seal the assurance; although the tear that bathed it spoke her hopes not unalloyed by tender apprehension. The count, drawing her towards him, and gazing delightedly, yet pensively, on her interesting and eloquent countenance, exclaimed; "Child of my heart's fondest care! lovely beam whom the pitying mercy of heaven has sent to illumine the gloom of my fading life! every moment, in unfolding to my view the sweet revival of thy sainted mother's perfections, blooming amidst thine own, draws thee nearer to my heart, and renders that heart still more loth to part with all it loves on earth: yet such is the unfortunate pressure of circumstances, that though this day only has given thee to my arms, to-morrow tears thee from them!"

"To-morrow!" faintly ejaculated Imogen.

"Thou knowest," continued the count, that the king at the head of his army has sat down before the gates of Laon, one of the principal towns in the possession of the League. It is much feared that the city must surrender: nothing indeed can prevent it, but the success of a scheme adopted by the duke de Mayenne and the Spanish general, the count de Mansfield."

"And what is that scheme?" eagerly demanded Imogen.

"To send a considerable convoy of ammunition and provisions, under a strong escort, to the besieged."

"And is that practicable, my lord?"

"It will at least be hazardous," said the count, shaking

his head; "and who can hope to frustrate the vigilance of the all-observing Henry?"

"But how does it immediately affect us, my dear father?"

"Imogen, at the moment I was about to prefer my request to conduct you to Guise, I found the convoy was appointed to set off by to-morrow's dawn, and that I had the honour to be appointed the second in command."

Imogen turned pale.

"To leave thee behind me is impossible; and the only plan left me to pursue, is such as my heart, and probably thy courage, will shrink from encountering."

"Give peace to thine own heart, and fear not my courage, my lord;" said Imogen firmly.

"Well then, my sweet heroine," said the count with a melancholy smile, "I was thinking, that as the route of the convoy lies for a considerable way along the high road to Guise, to send you in a litter, under its escort, so far on your way, and to consign you to the care of my most trusty servants and esquire for the rest of your journey."

"My dear sir," said Imogen with a sigh, "to deliberate would be vain, where there is no alternative. The hazard of such an enterprize will be, doubtless, infinitely less than our mutual fears will be apt to imagine; and to encounter a probable risk, is at least preferable to awaiting a certain danger: for my own part I have no fears but what a separation from you awakens."

"Sweet child!" said the count, rather apostrophizing than addressing her, "and innocent as sweet! thou knowest not that woman, lovely, helpless woman, in junctures such as these, is surrounded by dangers whose cause lives within herself."

"Do you then think our scheme a hazardous one?" demanded Imogen.

"The king," replied the count, "will not act with his accustomed vigour and prevoyance, if he suffers us to gain the town unmolested: and should an engagement take place, ——"

"You, my father, will be exposed to imminent dangers! and what then becomes of the unfortunate Imogen?"

"My beloved child!" said the count, drying her tears, then steeping the handkerchief in his own, "forgive me, if with less heroism than thou possessest, I have suffered my tender apprehensions for thee to get the better of my judgment: it is, doubtless, my solicitude for thy safety which has sketched out ideal terrors, and tormented my heart with self-created evils, which may never be realized."

"In that belief," said Imogen with a faint smile, "let our hopes for the present repose."

The count then talked with more composure of their intended expedition. Imogen's litter was to be placed near the centre of the convoy, where the count's command would chiefly lie. Her packet from the canoness to madame de Rosemont and the chevalier de Sorville, with her father's papers, were to be instantly dispatched to the latter: and Imogen, when she arrived at the duchess de Guise's, was to write to the abbess of St. Dominick and the lady Magdelaine de Montmorell, informing them of the discovery of her parents; to thank them for their attention; and to send a magnificent present to the former, as a gratuity for the support afforded her from her earliest years by the convent.

For this, and every other purpose her rank in life, and situation at the hotel de Guise, might require, the count was to send an unlimited order to his banker at Paris, to supply her with whatever sums of money she might demand. Then observing that a cloud still hung over the spirits of his daughter, he proposed, to amuse her, that they should adjourn to the outer division of the tent, to take a view of the camp, without being seen.

Imogen, ever alive to the pleasure a novel spectacle affords to a young mind, delightedly assented. The count fondly drew her arm through his own, and passed on to what might be called the antichamber of the tent; then partly concealing themselves behind the drapery of the scarlet curtain* which shaded its entrance, a scene

* Nothing could be more splendid than the camp of the Leaguers; the luxury and ease in which the duke de Mayenne revelled in the midst of his army, did not escape the sportive railery of the witty king.

equally animated and interesting presented itself to their view.

The sun was setting in cloudless splendour. Over the plain, where the camp extended to a considerable distance, the arms of the soldiery glittered to its beams: the unfurled banners, gently agitated by the evening breeze, glowed with its departing blushes: the gaudy streamers, which distinguished the tents of the officer from the subaltern, caught the warm reflection: and the flood of crimson light which flowed from the west, imbued every object with its rich and mellow tints. The splendid armour of the warrior chief, his snowy plumage and flowing mantle, as he leaned on his glittering falchion, or with haughty stride traced the accustomed rounds, gave to his manly form that chivalrous air of dauntless valour, which the magic illusion of romance sheds on the hero of its own creation. The soldiers under arms were going through their accustomed evolutions, while the troops not on immediate duty, were scattered in various groups through the intersected avenues formed by their tents. Some, leaning on their lances, seemed to betray the heat of the argument they discussed, by the vivacity of their gestures; some were staking their newly gained spoil at quoits; and others, lolling before their tents, hummed their provincial songs, or sent back their pensive thought to the beloved and peaceful home of their youth: while the air of gay-hearted hilarity, which was distinguishable in the countenance and gestures of the French troops, formed a lively contrast to the solemn deportment and Moorish gravity that marked the appearance of the Spanish soldiery. The trumpet's shrill blast, the drum's deep-toned beat, and the confused murmur of many thousand voices ascending on the air, with the martial music of the various military bands; all these intermingling sounds so appropriate to the scene, gave it the last finish: and to the vivid and romantic fancy of the young spectators, it appeared rather as a splendid effort of fairy conjuration, than a spectacle of real existence.

The count watched, with delighted satisfaction, those traits of natural and lively emotion which gradually be-

trayed themselves on the animated countenance of his daughter. "All," said he mentally, "sweet child of nature, is pleasing to thee, because all is new: O youth, what a season of delight is thine!"

The curiosity and pleasure of Imogen seemed incapable of satiety; and she gazed on the busy scene before her, till the sun sent no dying beam to the horizon, and the shadows of night floated in grey vapours on the plain, involving every object in its undistinguishing hue; already the watch-fires glimmered with dusky flame through the curling mists; and through the waving drapery of the tents, the illuminations within flung their broken light; while the gaudy crowd, which lately strewed the plain, retired to snatch such temporary rest as the uncertain destiny of war permits; all but the night-watch, whose heavy-pacing step vibrated along the allotted round, mingling their fainter echoes with their armour's clanking sounds, the charger's hollow neighings, and the drum's last order of retreat. Then all was still, and silence hung upon the death of every sound.

From this scene of interest, the solicitude of the count for the health of his daughter obliged her to retire: they returned to the interior of the tent, which was lit up; and while they refreshed themselves with fruit and some light wine, the count informed his daughter, that he should write that night to the chevalier de Sorville, in order to bring him to the camp, that he might inform him himself of the happiness he enjoyed in the recovery of his child, whose loss the chevalier almost equally lamented with her father; and that he should also write a letter to the duchess de Guise, giving an abstract of Imogen's life, and the circumstances of her recovery.

"And now, my child," said the count, with an air serious and impressive, "lend me, for a few minutes, thy undivided attention. He, who alone sees into the unborn events of futurity, and who holds in his almighty grasp the destinies which govern the universe, can alone know the result of the hazardous enterprize we are now venturing on. But whatever may be thy earthly father's fate, thy father which is in heaven will, I trust, encompass thee with the shadow of his wing, and guard thy

life and innocence for the enjoyment of happier years than have yet been thine. Nay, hear me out, sweet Imogen! I would willingly believe that safety hovers round thee with guardian care; that thou wilt reach in perfect security the hospitable asylum of thy illustrious protectress; and that thy father, having fulfilled his duty as a soldier, shall soon be able to gratify the feelings of the man; to retire from the harassing cares of warfare, and close the evening of a stormy life in the bosom of domestic felicity. Such are the suggestions of hope and probability; but while there is a *possibility* of the reverse, let us at least endeavour to provide against those conjunctures it may not be practicable for human power to prevent. I may fail in the attempt I have undertaken; for to deserve success confers no irrefragable claim on its possession: and you, who have already been a prisoner to *one* army, may become, under the influence of war's uncertain fortune, the captive of *another*. Should I fall, the chevalier de Sorville will claim you as the daughter of his friend: should I survive the enterprize, you will need no other champion: but this remember, should a fatal chance throw you for a time into the hands of the *royalists*, be not too prompt to reveal your rank and name; for high in the royal army stands the betrothed husband of your mother, the deadly enemy of your father, the baron de Montargis. Thy second loss, like the first, would afford a triumph to his malice, and might retard thy liberation; or, by promoting it, render thy father the debtor of him to whom he would scorn to owe a less consequent obligation. Not only the baron, but his son, now advanced in the bloom of manhood, basks in the sunshine of courtly favour: the tie of interest alone unites Henry to the father, but it is supposed the *stronger* bond of sympathy draws his royal favour towards the son: for the king affects to admire romantic heroism in the field, and romantic sentiment in the closet; and the younger de Montargis either affects or possesses both. He has already been involved in a dangerous adventure, which led him into the heart of our camp, from which he narrowly escaped; and the king, instead of reprimanding his boyish imprudence, has recompensed with

knighthood and military command what *he* deems his *dumtless valour*. From the power of the cold iron-hearted de Montargis, and his self-sufficient and inflated boy, may heaven guard and preserve my child !”

Imogen's spirits were sunk even to tears by the apprehensions her father's conversation awakened, and she wept in silence on his shoulder.

“Nay, beloved,” said he, tenderly pressing her to his heart, “I feel that it is but a timid excess of affection, that tinges my foreboding thoughts with the sad gloom of apprehension.”

“And, I trust, but the timid excess of mine,” said Imogen, smiling through her tears, “that renders my heart so much alive to the infection of your tender fears. Yet you shall find, my lord, I will not disgrace my doublet and hose ; and that to-morrow I shall catch a spark of thy fire, whose vital warmth shall diffuse hope and courage through every artery of my heart.”

“Till that eventful to-morrow,” said the count, embracing her, “repose in peace ; for the fatigues thou must undergo call for that strength of frame and spirits, the soft restorer of nature's wearied powers can best bestow.”

Imogen then, at her father's request, retired to the apartment where she had slept the preceding night ; and where a female night-dress, coarse but cleanly, had been provided for her, by the woman who had attended her in the morning.

Imogen sought not to woo repose to her pillow when she pressed it : the variety and nature of those reflections which agitated her mind forbade its influence : the extraordinary events of the past day still recurred to her apprehension ; the uncertain fate which hung upon the future, wearied her imagination. Safety or danger alternately soothed or disturbed her hopes ; and now she beheld herself the distinguished guest of the illustrious duchess de Guise, and now the orphan captive of the implacable and haughty de Montargis. Then the terrors of her scared fancy sought oblivion in a fond recurrence to her father's history. The romantic enthusiasm of St. Doryal, the splendid virtues of de Sorville, the mild ex-

cellence, the winning perfections of Julia, alternately floated in her memory, nor did the scenery of St. Dorval and de Montargis claim less interest than the events and characters by which it was animated.

Provence and its classic river, which the eager eye of Imogen had so often sought upon the chart of France, and which ever appeared to that enamoured eye as traced in those living characters which chemic art designs, with the fire of electricity, communicating a soft vibration to every fibre of her heart, had been the scene of her parent's youthful loves, the residence of her ancestors, and probably would be the future home of her life. The mention of the Durance in her father's manuscript, had awakened the associating principle of thought : and her heart, with logical accuracy, severed each closely-linked idea, till that which occasioned a fond recollection of the minstrel filled her whole mind, and, mingling with the stealing visions of repose, shed o'er her slumbers the dream of love and fancied bliss.

CHAP. XV.

A touch more rare subdues all pangs, all fears.

SHAKESPEARE.

As waves white-bubbling over the deep come swelling, roaring on, as rocks meet roaring waves, so foes attacked and fought ; man met with man, and steel with steel ; shields sound and warriors fall : as an hundred hammers on the red son of the furnace, so rose, so rung their swords.

OSSIAN.—*Phigal*, b. 4.

THE busy murmur of the camp chased the spirit of repose from the pillow of Imogen. She arose, and was already equipped for her journey when her father entered the apartment: the pale cheek, the heavy eye, betrayed the nocturnal vigils of the count. With the morning salutation he gave his daughter a tender embrace, and informed her the convoy was then drawn out, and the litter, which was to convey her, in readiness.

To Imogen the laconism of his manner betrayed a

heart but ill at ease; for extreme anxiety is seldom loquacious. Having forced her to take some refreshment, he led her to the entrance of the tent, close to which stood a small litter drawn by four horses, and surrounded by four of the count's domestics in military habits. The count again in great emotion embraced his child, gave her a tender but faint benediction, placed her in the litter, and, mounting a fierce charger, himself led the way to the convoy, which was on the point of marching. The litter was placed in the centre of the ammunition-waggons: the count, at the head of his troop, rode at the distance of a few paces from it. The heart of Imogen throbbed with violence; her eye, which would have sought the comfort of her father's presence, shrunk from the inquisitive gaze of every curious spectator. The trumpet's shrill blast echoed along the extended line; the word of command flew from rank to rank: in an instant the whole body was in motion.

It proceeded for some leagues in that careless security the sanguine hope of success inspired: already the beaming spires of Laon flash on their eyes; already the banners of the League appear to float on its ramparts. These objects, whether real or imaginary, stimulate their exertion, and change expectation into certainty: while, triumphing in their nearly realized and hazardous project, they reach the wood which lies half-way between the forest of La Fere and Laon, the most critical point on their route; and the count beholds at a trivial distance the road where his daughter's equipage separates from the convoy, and proceeds, without the apprehension of danger, to the town of Guise: when lo! the sudden signal of alarm, blown by the war-horn, vibrates from the advanced guard along the line, and rouses the inflated warriors to a variety of motion and energetic effort; the hauberk suddenly raised, the spear as swiftly pointed, the lance boldly couched, the clash of arms resounding on every side! From the chief in command the deep-toned war-voice thunders its orders; his subalterns give it endless echo: every feature of alarm, eagerness, and exertion, burst around, like so many refractions of light from the dusky surface of a flint. The vivacity of the

youthful warriors rushing impetuously to the charge, is scarcely repressed by the veteran's scanning look of cool experience: young velocity scarcely rivals ancient vigour in exertions of nervous energy: while amidst this scene of wild and furious tumult, one soul seems to impel and animate the whole,—eager anxiety to engage, with due subordination to supreme command.

The escort of the convoy now halt to receive and oppose the furious charge made on it by a considerable detachment of the royal army, headed by the gallant duke de Biron. The attack is made and sustained with equal fury. Already the cavalry are forced to retreat to the sides of the waggons; and the onset made by the royalists on the infantry is so overwhelming, that, unable to resist the torrent, they seek temporary shelter amidst the carts which convey the ammunition. Mean time the Spanish battalion, desperate from the dilemma to which the horse and foot are reduced, rush madly forward with an attack so vigorous, that the royalists, discomfited, begin to retreat in confusion and dismay. It is then that the noble duke de Biron, with all the spirit of heroic ardour, commands a hundred gentlemen of illustrious birth, who had accompanied him, to alight, arm themselves with pistols, and fight hand to hand! From that moment the combat rages with a fury that mocks the order of discipline. Chief grapples with chief; and the subaltern, twining his arms round those of his opponent, shares with him the same glorious grave. The French fire at last subdues the Spanish firmness: the escort gives way on every side, and flies in every direction: the victors pursue them with desolating fury, and suffer but a few to return to their camp, the sad historians of their dire defeat; then, having sated their vengeance on the enemy, take charge of the prisoners, and, laden with spoil, provisions, and ammunition, return in triumph to the royal army.

Among the sad and various pictures of human suffering which this scene of carnage and desolation presented, the most affective was that which the situation of the count de St. Dorval and his daughter afforded. On the first alarm the count rode up to the litter, and, in a tone of

voice he meant should be inspiring, attempted to soothe those apprehensions in the timid bosom of his daughter, which on her account he could not extinguish in his own. Then called on to lead his troops, with a look of agony he returned the heart-breaking glance of Imogen; who now, lost to every sense but that which general terror and apprehension for her father inspired, gazed on the scene of horror and tumult before her, under the influence of a dreadful suspense less supportable than the most fatal certainty. Mean time the combat became every moment more fierce, more desperate.

The count fought, almost beneath the eye of his shuddering daughter, with the dauntless valour of heroic youth, tempered by the cool sagacity of a veteran; and stimulated to exertion almost more than human by his own private interest, in addition to his ardour for the common cause in which he embarked. It was the various feelings of the father, the man, the soldier, that combined their influence, nerved his arm, and gave force and vigour to every exertion. The eye of the almost breathless Imogen still pursues the rapid lightning of his brandished sword: amidst the general uproar his form only presents itself, his voice only vibrates on her ear, every emotion of her beating heart is condensed into the one overwhelming apprehension for his safety. She beholds him carried away by the disorder of the troops from that station affection had fixed near her litter; she sees him sustain a variety of attacks; she sees his helmet cleft in twain; she beholds a cavalier single him out with savage ferocity, at the moment that his troop with the rest fly in disorder; his horse, covered with wounds, sinks beneath him; his opponent joins in the pursuit: the count, on foot and wounded, totters towards the litter; then, faint with loss of blood, sinks beside it, while two soldiers advance fiercely towards the prostrate hero with looks of desperation and brandished spears.

At that moment the woman's heart of Imogen ceases to tremble. She springs from the litter: the affections of that warm heart, stimulated by filial duty, worked on by tenderness, compassion, and apprehension for its object, brace every nerve with a strength that mocks the

timid calculation of danger, and braves the form of peril in its most dreadful aspect! She flings herself beside her father; and, with her outstretched arms, forms around him a shield consecrated by nature. The soldiers brutally attempt to tear her from the bleeding bosom of her parent; they succeed in their savage endeavours: a shriek of agony bursts from her quivering lips; she struggles, she pants; her mind ceases to be conscious of its sufferings; the heroism of sensibility is fled; nature takes its course; she falls lifeless to the earth, already strewn with the bodies of the dead!

A young cavalier of splendid appearance, who had viewed the singular scene at some distance, as, disgusted with the unsatiated ferocity of his fellow conquerors, he halted in pursuit of the conquered, now rode up to the soldiers, and ordered them at their peril to take care of the young prisoner; whose form alone betrayed his youth, for the face of the captive was smeared with that blood which had flowed from a wound in her arm she had received in her last struggle with those who tore her from her father's breast. The cavalier was then borne away by the torrent which poured on in pursuit of the vanquished.

Thrown in a cart among the wounded and the dying, Imogen, after a long suspension of every faculty, awakened to a sense of her situation: that sense was but transitory; the agony of her mind, together with that of her wound, plunged her again into all the oblivion of total insensibility, and one fainting fit succeeded another until they reached the royal camp.

It was in a large tent, and stretched on a straw mattress, that perfect consciousness of the late events and her present situation was restored to her. The groans of the wounded soldiers who lay round her vibrated in her ears. She raised her languid eyes, and beheld the suffering wretches attended by a grave formal-looking man; who, regardless of the impatient supplications of agony, with a cold, deliberate and unfeeling air, went through the discharge of his duty professionally methodical. Imogen was the last to share his attention. He raised her arm; and, after having slightly examined the

wound, with a supercilious smile, turned to a hag of wizard-like appearance, who followed him, and exclaimed: " Dame, here is room for your skill; apply some of your simples to this young cavalier's *scratch*." Then, with an air of careless indifference, he left the tent. The old sybil roughly seized the bleeding arm of the invalid; and, fixing her ghastly eyes on the shuddering form of the prisoner, with a loud laugh exclaimed: " Marry, forsooth, a pretty valiant cavalier truly, to faint with a scratch of a pin! Why, sir knight of the fairies, thou should'st never have come within arm's length of thy lady mother's bodkin. Mass! thou wert a rare gentleman to leave they nurse's arms and come a soldiering. An the duke de Guise has no stouter sword-men than thee, our good king might win his whole army with a handful of sweetmeats."

During this curious (and, from her dialect, almost unintelligible) harangue, she was busied in applying simples and tying up the arm of her patient. She then, humming an old ballad, left the tent. The agony of bodily suffering soon lulled the companions of Imogen into a torpor that resembled sleep: Imogen's deeper wounds were of the heart, and bled in anguish over the doubtful fate of her unfortunate father. Still he appeared to her eye, as it had last beheld him, prostrate on the earth, the blood gushing from his breast, the grey locks of his uncovered head bathed in the vital stream, the torture of his mind distorting every feature, as, with a feeble arm, he endeavoured to withhold his child from the grasp of violation, then overpowered ~~and~~ lifeless on the earth. In all the frenzy of grief such a recollection was calculated to inspire, Imogen started from her straw bed; and paced the narrow limits of her tent with a hurried step, whose echo caught the attention of the sentinel without. " Why, monsieur," said he, looking in on her, " for aught I see, there is no use in keeping you in the hospital who are so light of foot, and keeping others out in the open air who are not able to crawl. Here, monsieur," addressing the serjeant of the guard, " pray cast an eye upon this party-coloured cavalier, who looks more like a charlatan than a soldier. *Mort de ma vie!* you succour

a town blocked up by our glorious king! I wot thou should'st have stayed with thy boy-general, the little duke, and helped him to whip tops and play at quoits. *Sacre Dieu!* you victual a town!"

"Why, this is the minstrel-like youth," said the serjeant, gazing on Imogen with a look of recognizance, "who got between us and the rebel count de St. Dorval. I trow, we had made him pay for his interfering, but for our colonel, who gave us some kind of charge about him; and so we had the humanity to spare his life, and fling him into a cart with the killed and wounded."

Imogen, in whom the power of articulation seemed wholly suspended, now raised her timid eyes, and in a voice faint and indistinct said:

"Will you suffer me, monsieur, to ask one question?"

"Let it be a brief one then," said the serjeant bluntly.

"Did the count de St. Dorval survive your attack?"

The serjeant with a malicious smile turned upon his heel, and, calling out to a soldier under arms, bade him take charge of that prisoner, and conduct him to the next tent on the left, where the last prisoner had died of his wounds; then, roughly seizing her by the arm, pushed her forward.

Imogen, unresisting, faint, and trembling, followed the soldier; and, eagerly shunning the gaze of unfeeling curiosity her singular appearance attracted, raised her eyes till she reached the place of her destination.

It was a small tent, furnished with a mattress, table, chair, mirror, and a few other articles, such as spoke its late occupant to be a prisoner of no mean rank; and Imogen doubted not but she owed the comparative comfort of her present habitation to the interest she had awakened in the bosom of the superior officer alluded to by the serjeant, but of whose humane interference in her favour she had not, amidst the horrors and tumults of the scene, retained the faintest recollection; and supposing the serjeant had followed her, she turned round to enquire into a circumstance that at once awakened hope and gratitude, when she perceived he was gone. She then advanced to the door of the tent, and attempted to address the sentinel who paced with measured step

without it ; but rudely interrupting her, he pointed his bayonet as if to prevent her advancing, and told her he had received orders to hold no parley with a prisoner and a rebel.

Imogen, who now felt herself cut off from every species of communication, obliged to stifle every emotion of anxiety, suspense, and curiosity, turned back desponding ; and measured the limits of her little prison with a quick and uneven step that betrayed the perturbation of her mind, and the variety of agonizing reflections that wearied it. The uncertainty of her own fate, the still stronger apprehensions she entertained for that of her father, gave rise to a train of painful cogitations, which the high colouring of imagination exaggerated beyond every power of patient endurance. To the agony of her mind was added no inconsiderable degree of bodily pain ; and she had suffered so much from heat and thirst that, totally overcome, she was on the point of falling to the earth, when she observed a small jar of fresh water lying near her. She eagerly seized and carried it to her parched lips, and felt as if she inhaled a new sense of existence with the refreshing draught. As she laid down the vessel her eye glanced on the mirror : she shuddered as she contemplated the figure it reflected to her gaze. Her long hair loose and dishevelled hung wildly over her neck and shoulders ; the ashy hue of death paled her cheek, whose whiteness was rendered more conspicuous from the crimson drops that stained it ; while her outer garment, torn and disfigured, but ill concealed the page's light garb she wore beneath it.

Struck with horror at her own ghastly and singular appearance, she bathed her face with what water was left, disentangled her tresses and bound them round her head, and disencumbered herself from the torn fragments of her upper garment. Revived by this little personal attention, she continued with renovated strength to pursue her locomotive reflections till the darkness of night hung over the camp ; then overcome with bodily fatigue and bodily pain, and wearied by those conflicts of mind the struggles of her hopes and apprehensions, and her doubts and fears, awakened, she flung herself on the

mattress, and exhausted nature bowed to the soft influence of obliviating rest.

CHAP. XVI.

Vi conosco amate stelle
 A quei palpiti d'amore
 Che svegiate nel mio sen,
 Non m'inganno; siete quelle
 N'ho l'immagine nel core,
 Ne sareste così belle
 Se non foste del mio ben'.

METASTASIO.

THAT restoration which ever attends on the repose of innocence, shed its balm on the wounded mind, the debilitated frame, of Imogen, and united with the native excellence of her constitution to breathe renovation on every sense, and restore that elasticity of spirits which with the young and sanguine suffers but a temporary suspension. The morning's cheery light seemed to dispel the gloomy visions of her mind, with an effect similar to that produced by its return on the natural world; and the sun, as it shone through the curtain entrance of the tent, kissed with its warm beam a cheek on whose polished surface the rose of health again faintly blushed its return. Her mind, restored in some degree to its strength of tone, busied itself in separating her ideas from the confusion which amazement, recent horror, and overwhelming emotion, were calculated to inspire; and hope reilluminated its vestal flame in a bosom where Nature seemed determined Despair should ever *despair* of seizing; for it was a bosom organized for the reception of every sweet and joyous feeling, and glowing with that genial warmth which nourished every germ of happiness to maturity, and considers even the cloud of affliction as the transient precursor of future bliss.

Imogen had scarcely risen from her pillow, when the sentinel who patrolled before the tent looked in upon her. She observed her guard had been changed during the

night, and from the countenance of the soldier she believed the change would be in her favour ; or probably she was disposed to see every thing in a more grateful light than the preceding evening.

" Ah, my young sir knight ! " exclaimed the sentinel as she approached him : " why truly, if sleep were a banquet, thou hast fared rarely ; for I have watched thee since the first cock crew, and by my holy rood thou hast slept it out like a prince. I warrant thee, thou art ready for a slice of our black bread ; and a pipkin of Rhenish wine would not long lie in thy way. Well, thou look'st a puny little soul, and thou shalt share my mess willingly ; for else till the mid-day watch is relieved thy appetite must keep cool."

Imogen, with all that ardour of hope so easily awakened in the heart of the young and unhappy, fancied she read in the apparent courtesy of her guard a prelude to more material services. " I am most grateful to thee, my good friend," said she, " for thy kind offer, though I feel no inclination at present to avail myself of it ; yet it emboldens me to consider thee as one who in compassionating my situation may be inclined to relieve it."

" Thou art right," said the soldier bluntly ; " as far as pitying thee and sharing my mess with thee goes, I am thy man."

" And no more ? " demanded Imogen despondingly.

" Thou dardest not ask more," returned the sentinel : " for though thou art thyself a little traitor to thy king, thou dardest not tamper with the fidelity of a soldier who has the honour to serve under him, and the grace to love him next to his heavenly commander."

" Imogen, who, though she severely felt the disappointment of her vague and sanguine expectations in the stern fidelity of her guard, yet, with the liberality of a superior mind, revered that virtue by which she was a sufferer.

" I do not wish to corrupt thy honour," said she, " but to interest thy compassion. I am not so ignorant as to believe my escape from hence could be practicable ; nor probably, could it be effected, would it avail me," she added with a sigh. " Ignorant of the laws of war, I would know the destiny that awaits me ; I would inquire whe-

ther there was a possibility of acquainting my friends that I live and am a prisoner?"

The soldier, looking on her with a countenance in which duty and compassion evidently struggled, returned: "I have already trespassed on my orders by thus long holding parley with thee. I can only tell thee thou art in noble hands, for thou art the prisoner of the *baron de Montargis*."

Death seemed to have hung his chilliest icicles on the heart of Imogen, as she faintly repeated, "The baron de Montargis!"

The sentinel returned to his station.

Imogen no longer walked with hurried step under the agitating influence of suspense. She had now every thing to fear, and nothing to hope. In an attitude of despondence she seated herself on the side of her mattress: her countenance, her whole figure, betrayed the silent torpor of despair!

From this state of sullen inanity she was awakened by a guard, under the command of the serjeant she had seen the night before, who ordered her to arise and accompany them.

"Whither?" faintly demanded Imogen.

"To the baron de Montargis," retorted the serjeant.

"Oh God!" exclaimed Imogen impulsively, and wringing her hands, while tears filled her eyes, "'tis impossible: I cannot, will not, go a prisoner into the presence of a Montargis!"

"No!" returned the serjeant; "then by my holy dame, we will assist thee. Soldiers, do your duty."

"Lead on then!" said Imogen firmly, and disengaging herself from the grasp of her guards.

The fire which had warmed the souls of her illustrious ancestors, seemed suddenly to spread its flame through her sinking heart; the pure and noble blood that filled her veins flowed with quicker circulation; the tear dried in her indignant eye; her soul was resolved. The last descendant of the house of St. Dorval, though a woman, disdained to shrink from the presence of a baron de Montargis. The timidity of her nature gave way to its pride: "Lead on!" said she firmly to the soldiers; and, surround-

ed by her guard, was conducted through a considerable part of the camp to the tent of the baron de Montargis.

The rich scarlet drapery which shaded its entrance, the banners that waved over its summit, spoke the military consequence of its owner. Though large, it was wholly occupied by a crowd that waited the orders of the baron, who had that day been appointed colonel of the king's life-guards ; and Imogen and her guards were detained for a considerable time at the entrance, while behind their robust and brawny forms the timid prisoner sheltered herself from the gaze of the passing multitude. The crowd gradually dispersed ; and, only attended by the serjeant, she was ordered to advance. The baron de Montargis was writing at a small table : a cloak of purple velvet, thrown back from the shoulders, discovered the brilliant polish of his shining breast-plate, and fell in rich and graceful folds to the ground ; the dark plumage of his helmet shaded his face, and added to the height of a form majestically lofty, even though half recumbent ; while a young page tottered beneath the weight of his cuirass and sword, of which he seemed just to have disengaged himself. As the profile of his figure was only visible, Imogen raised her eyes to its contemplation : then letting them fall to the earth, and folding her arms, stood in proud and silent expectation of the result of this extraordinary interview. No tear bedewed the feverish blush that burnt on her cheek ; no sigh of apprehension died on her lip ; the heroism of pride and sensibility was now wound up in the bosom of St. Dorval's daughter to its last strained pitch ; a word, a breath, a thought, would have been sufficient to destroy it.

" May it please you, monseigneur," said the serjeant, stepping up to the baron with an air meanly servile, " the prisoner you condescended to express some interest in, has, through my interference, been treated with every mark of respect, and now awaits your good leisure."

The serjeant drew back, the baron flung down his pen, turned round, and having for a moment regarded the half-averted form of Imogen, said to the serjeant : " I thank you for your attention to my wishes ; it shall not

go unrewarded : but you may retire for the present ; I would speak to this youth alone." The serjeant obeyed.

"Speak," continued the baron, addressing Imogen, "young and daring stranger, who, thus habited in the garb of peace, hast braved the battle's fiercest rage; and wooing danger in its most dreadful form, didst rush between the suspended sword of death, and the prostrate form of the count de St. Derval."

The baron ceased to speak ; but no dauntless reply, consonant to the heroism he alluded to, answered the interrogation.

Imogen raised her drooping head, yet with difficulty raised it ; the fire of her eye was extinguished ; on the snowy surface of her cheek no vagrant tint betrayed the vital warmth of life ; her hand pressed on her bosom seemed to heave with the palpitation of her heart ; her lips, the fair rivals of her bloodless cheek, quivered with a broken sigh ; and while a glance, doubtful, tender, languid, and retiring, beamed from beneath the shadow of her half-raised eye-lash, panting, faint, and trembling, she appeared like a beautiful personification of Echo "in love's soft sadness pining into air." The baron arose ; advanced humanely towards his now almost life-less prisoner : his eye of fire rolled in silence over a form touched with no mortal interest ; his heart's sanguine tide rushed over his manly cheek, deserted again to his heart, again crimsoned his face, and the power of articulation at last returned to lips, that faintly, tremblingly, ejaculated, "Heavenly powers ! the Novice of St. Dominick."

"The minstrel of Provence !" inarticulately returned Imogen, and clung for support to the pillar against which she leaned.

"Then I am not deceived," said the baron, supporting her in his arms, and clasping her trembling hand in his ; "this form is no illusion conjured by my oft deluding fancy, to cheat the wishes of my heart into transient bliss ; for oh ! this hand, this precious hand, which communicates in its touch a kindred throb to the wild pulsations of mine ; that glance, which plays upon my heart's finest nerve, and restores it to that soft vibration Imogen's eyes

first awakened; tells me, though thus disguised, though thus so unexpectedly found, that thou art indeed that Imogen, who, in days precious to the dearest recollection of memory, shed love's vital beam upon the kindling soul of the wandering visitant of Montmorell."

A thousand hearts swelled in the bosom of Imogen, whose trembling form still depended on the encircling arm of the baron for support. The resentment of slighted love, the tender effusions of awakened passion, the amazement natural to a discovery so far beyond the limits of probability, the fondness of the mistress, the sensitive delicacy of the woman, the humiliating feelings of the prisoner, and the inborn pride of the heiress of the count de St. Dorval, the hereditary enemy of a Montargis, alternately struggled in her breast. The baron's ardent gaze, the too close pressure of his embrace, gave to pride and delicacy the sole empire over her tumultuous sensations. With an air firm and dignified, she withdrew herself from his arms; the truant colour of her cheek again suffused its paleness even to the deepest tint of crimson; the kindling spirit of her mind reanimated her languid eyes: she retreated a few steps, then modestly but without perturbation replied:—"It is true, sir, I am that person, who, when some months back you sought asylum in the chateau de Montmorell, under the assumed character of a minstrel, held a temporary station in the household of its lady. I am now your prisoner; and you are, I am told, the baron de Montargis, to whose humane interference I owe my life."

The baron started: the air, the manner, the words of Imogen, froze the tide of passion that a moment before rolled tumultuously in his veins: he gazed on her in silent wonder; a new recollection seemed to break upon his mind; his colour changed, he advanced, drew a seat towards Imogen, which her weakness rendered acceptable; then pacing the tent with hasty strides, after an uninterrupted pause of some minutes, he seated himself near her, and, with a long-drawn sigh, exclaimed: "Lady, in the sudden, the overwhelming emotions thy most unexpected and too welcome appearance excited, the past, the present, and the future, were equally ab-

sorbed. I beheld thee ; again beheld thee ; that rapturous conviction filled my whole soul, and my heart was inaccessible to every other thought : but even my impetuous feelings bow to the supremacy of thy power ; it was for thee only to rouse those powerful emotions, which but a moment back bewildered my senses in the trance of rapture ; it is for thee only to subdue them. We have indeed both changed characters since we last met : I left thee, lady, the gentle Novice of St. Dominick, the fair representative of cloistral purity untinctured with cloistral gloom : timidly gay, and bashfully wise, thy genius, like the purest ore immersed in debased chrysaline, shone through the gloom of thy rigid destiny ; while thy modest nature shrunk from betraying those intellectual perfections, which concealed their splendour beneath the retiring graces of woman's witching softness. I found thee (yes, lady, that air of cold reserve assists my truant recollection)—I found thee amidst the tumult and carnage of a field of battle, foremost in the career of danger, opposing that delicate form with Amazonian boldness to the fury of the fight, and, with arms formed in the symmetry of love's softest mould, shielding the prostrate count de St. Dorval from instant death, and saving his life even at the risk of thine own !”

“ And did I save it ?” eagerly demanded the weeping Imogen ; whose feelings, worked up to the last excess of emotion, needed but the sound of her father's name wholly to overpower them : “ and has the count de St. Dorval preserved his liberty with his life ?”

“ He received both, lady, from me,” replied the baron haughtily, but with uncontrolled emotion.

“ Then for that one act,” said Imogen, throwing herself at his feet, and bathing his hands with her tears, “ may heaven shower its choicest blessings on you ! In saving his life you have not saved his only ; in securing his liberty you have restored me to mine.”

The baron was overpowered : almost ready to sink beside Imogen, he with difficulty raised her ; and snatching his hand from the soft grasp of hers, “ Go !” said he, “ too dangerous even in that sensibility another excites. I lack not thy gratitude, nor his for whose sake

only it flows ; nay, I deserve it not. Fate placed a noble triumph in my hands, nor did I suffer it to escape. My house's deadliest foe, the count de St. Dorval, lay at my mercy ; and thinkest thou with this no common enemy I would have played a common part ? No ; I rescued him from the power of those with whom he vainly struggled for life, placed him on my own horse, gave him in care to his squire who supported him in his arms, nor even deigned to tell him it was thus a Montargis triumphed over his enemies ! It was thus I revenged myself on the man whom it was my inheritance to hate, who tore from my father's heart his blooming bride even at the altar's step, whom from my cradle I have been taught as a rebel to oppose, as a bigot to detest, as an enemy to despise !”

“ No, my lord,” interrupted Imogen indignantly, “ you do not hate, you cannot despise, the count de St. Dorval ; that sympathy which exists between the virtuous of every rank, of every persuasion, forbids it. It is the narrow suggestions of early-imbibed prejudices that veil your better reason, and make you behold errors in the character of your enemy which exist but in the distempered bias of your own imagination. All noble as is the count de St. Dorval, he is still less illustrious by his birth than by his virtues ; even his errors are respectable, since they flow from a mistaken sense of right : his political and religious sentiments, which subject him to the odium of rebellion and bigotry, are the principles of his inheritance, not of his conviction ; and the loyalty and toleration of the baron de Montargis are probably but offsprings of the same growth. It is the motive, and not the act, by which we are to be judged ; and while the heart remains untainted, the aberrations of the mind are rather to be pitied than condemned.”

The emotions which betrayed themselves in the countenance of the baron, as he listened to his prisoner, spoke an agitation of mind that baffled expression ; then, while with impassioned admiration he gazed on her countenance, over which a kindling animation gradually diffused its fire as she spoke, he exclaimed : “ Envidable St. Dorval ! to be defended by such arms as those, to be

vindicated by such lips! Oh! to what spell of magic dost thou owe thy power over the heart of *her* who has burst the strict barrier of female delicacy, and in unseemingly habit followed thee even amidst the battle's wildest fury; who has overcome her sex's softness, and braved that death she feared for thee alone; and who now, even in the power of thy foe, boldly vindicates thy errors, and with love's true sophistry converts thy very failings into virtues? Yes, thou shalt owe me a second life, more precious than the first: thy mistress, thy imprudent tender mistress, shall be restored to thee. Haply thy claims are prior to those my heart once made, and hers, oh sweet deception! appeared to sanction."

Tears of wounded pride, of shame, of insulted modesty, stole o'er the deep-tinted cheek of the prisoner; and, hurried away by the violence of her indignant emotion, she faintly replied: "Had I a thousand lives, they were too few to sacrifice for the preservation of count de St. Dorval, for he is—my father."

"Your father!" repeated the baron in the hurried accents of amazement: "Gracious God! Imogen the daughter of St. Dorval! Oh, Imogen! extraordinary and mysterious being! who in every situation, under every varying aspect, still bearest about thee that light of superiority which encompasses thee like a glory; who still awakenest interest and excitest amazement, speak; by that beam of truth that shines in the candour of thine eye, and mingles with the persuasive graces of thy lip, I conjure thee say who and what art thou? why comest thou here? why wearest thou this disguise? why art thou, erewhile the timid Novice of St. Dominick, wasting thy sweetness amidst the gloom of cloistral privacy, and now the daughter of the count de St. Dorval, the heroine of an army? Oh! why must the eager heart wait upon the pleasure of cold detail to satisfy its longings? why does it not possess the intuitive power of piercing the veil of mystery which enshrouds the fate of its object? why in the eloquent eyes of Imogen cannot Montargis read all his soul languishes to know, but which the wounded, the offended delicacy of St. Dorval's daughter may indignantly refuse to his entreaties?"

"Then you are," said Imogen in a tremulous voice, recollecting her father's last command, "the son of the baron de Montargis?"

"I am the son of him who was the baron de Montargis, who is by the king's royal pleasure the duke de Beauvilliers. Yet, oh my sweet enemy! forget that I am so; still behold at your feet the humble minstrel of Provence, as when in those stolen and delicious hours of transient bliss he breathed upon this fair hand the secret sigh of his soul; still behold me with those partial eyes, whose thrilling glances sunk deep to my heart, and waked its every pulse to transport's liveliest throb."

The warm tide of reviving tenderness rushed o'er the kindling soul of Imogen. She beheld at her feet the object of that romantic faithful passion whose treasured idea, twined round every finer fibre of her heart, had long been the source of all her joy, the dream of her rest, the subject of her waking thought; whom again to behold under many a deceptive plea, hope had lured her from the seclusion of her youth; whom now beholding, appeared to her enamoured eye adorned with all those great and noble graces the humility of his former disguise had concealed from her view: a youthful and illustrious warrior, in whose eye the flame of valour beamed, on whose lip the fire of genius and passion breathed. The haughtiness which dignified her manners was fled, the spirit which animated her countenance was extinct; the deep scarlet flush with which pride, wounded and indignant, coloured her cheek, faded to the rosy suffusion of tenderness chastened by modesty. Soft was the languor of her eye, and a thousand timid, tender, bashful graces insinuated themselves into her air, her attitude, her voice, as she requested the baron to rise. The smile which accompanied the request was omnipotent.

The baron obeyed, and, encouraged by its sweetness, repeated his petition, nor petitioned in vain. Imogen, anxious to relate, as he was to hear, every thing that could remove the faintest suspicion inimical to the delicacy of her character, the refinement of her feelings, or the propriety of her conduct, entered with brief simplicity into the recent particulars of her life. A rosy confu-

sion, a blushing earnestness, veiled at first those graces of recitation with which nature had eminently endowed her ; but as these soft effusions of bashfulness gradually vanished to the increasing interest of her story, as she related the interview with her father, touched on the circumstances of his life, and dwelled on that affecting moment which restored her to a parent, the pathos, the energy of her natural and feeling eloquence, rose with the importance of her subject ; while an unconscious sigh, a transient blush, a starting tear, betrayed the profound emotion of her sensible heart, and gave a higher finish to her detail than even the most brilliant figures of rhetoric could have bestowed. In slightly referring to the history of her father's life, she was unavoidably obliged to touch on the enmity which had so long subsisted between the houses of Montargis and de St. Dorval ; yet she did it with a delicacy, an emotion, that evinced the deep regret it inspired in a heart, which now more than ever lamented the dreadful effects of political and religious dissension.

While she spoke, the baron hung over her enamoured ; when she ceased, his eager eye still dwelled on the charms of her expressive countenance, his eager attention still hung upon the melody of her accents : he had given her sigh for sigh and tear for tear, and the silence which succeeded to her relation, was the eloquence of a soul too much agitated by contending passions to commit the expression of its feelings to the inadequate power of language.

While still he gazed in silent emotion on the interesting daughter of his enemy, her cheek grew pale, her head drooped, her eye became dim, her lips quivered ; the trembling and extended arms of the baron prevented her falling to the earth. The extreme fatigue she had undergone, the anxiety and violent perturbation which had agitated her mind, the pain of her slight wound, which now bled afresh, together with having tasted only a draught of water for more than thirty hours, and being wholly exhausted by the late extraordinary occurrence and the long narrative she had entered on, occasioned a weakness which she had felt stealing over her frame, and vainly endeavour-

ed to conquer. An exclamation of horror and amazement burst from the lips of the baron as the bandage which bound her arm gave way, and the blood flowed copiously from the ill-dressed scar. Imogen, though faint, was not insensible; she endeavoured to assure him the wound was but slight. The baron tore off his scarf, bound it round her arm, and placed her on a couch; then administering some drops that lay on the table, and which seemed to revive his languid captive, he rushed out of the tent.

In a few minutes he returned, accompanied by the surgeon, who the night before had deemed the wound of the humble prisoner too inconsequent for his attention. The whole nomenclature of the *materia medica* was now ransacked for technical terms to express its nature and magnitude: fawning obsequiousness lurked in every line of his countenance, and even his habitual and professional formality gave way to the impetuous and anxious impatience of the baron. As it was necessary the arm of the patient should be stripped, the baron retired; and while the surgeon examined and dressed the wound he threw out some hints, in the most respectful manner, that from the violent anxiety testified by the baron de Montargis, his patient must be of high rank, and constantly addressed her by the title of *madame*. Meanwhile two women of decent appearance entered the tent; the one held a bundle of female clothes, the other assisted the surgeon, who retired with a thousand apologies for having mistaken his noble patient for a prisoner of no consequence the preceding night in the hospital-tent; while Imogen, as much disgusted with his time-serving meanness as she had been with his inhumanity, was equally glad to see him depart and to find herself once more in female society.

Her woman's heart rejoiced in this restoration to an intercourse with her own sex, even of an inferior species; and in their countenances she thought she read those generic signs of the female character, softness and humanity, which perhaps only existed in the comparison she drew between their countenances and those of the warrior tribe by whom she had been lately surrounded. They civilly informed Imogen they had been sent to wait on

her by his excellency the baron de Montargis ; and conducted her to the interior apartment of the tent, which by its furniture seemed appropriated to repose. Here they spread out the little wardrobe : it was the simple garb of a French paysanne. Imogen, delighted by this delicate mark of attention in her amiable conqueror, exclaimed : " This is an indulgence indeed ! " and eagerly began to disencumber herself of her masculine attire, in which she had suffered some of modesty's most painful throes ; while her delicacy triumphed that she had divested herself of the minstrel robe which she had so long cherished as a precious relic, and which might have intimated some fond truths to its former owner, more flattering to his vanity than to her pride.

" Yes, lady," said the woman, in answer to her exclamation, " you must doubtless be happy to fling off your doublet and hose, as I once was when I followed my husband to the siege of Rouen in soldier's garb, for all the women were forbid the camp ; and beshrew me, you are in luck to get even such a dress as this, for we soldiers' wives generally pack up our whole wardrobes in our husbands' knapsacks. My good man," she continued, assisting Imogen in the duties of the toilet, " when he was last scouring the country, took this habit from a simple hind, who swore by the saints it was a wedding garb for his lady mistress. Our lady pardon my husband ! say I ; but then he swore that the hind looked like a papist and a Leaguer, and so he took three marks from him into the bargain."

Habited in a boddice and skirt of coarse texture but snowy hue, her luxuriant hair fastened up to the back of her head with a silken band of dark-green, and playing over her temples in negligent disorder, Imogen contemplated the form the mirror reflected with a satisfaction that flushed her cheek, while a sly thought of "*self-approving beauty*" stole on her gaze. The women, for whose attentions she was gratefully thankful, retired ; and she returned to the apartment she had before occupied, where she found a page in waiting, and a collation spread with fairy elegance. Notwithstanding her long-enforced abstinence, she ate sparingly : the strong and still turbulent

emotions of her heart "subdued all feeling else save what beat there ;" and while her mind had "food for meditation" even to excess, she seemed almost unconscious of the want of grosser nourishment : yet the little she did eat refreshed and revived her ; and, having dismissed the page, she withdrew from the table, fell prostrate to the earth, and, in the attitude of pious humility, raised a heart still humbler in gratitude to the Author of all good, to whose providential care she owed the preservation of her father's life and liberty, her own present safety, and that flow of happiness which now succeeded to the load of anxiety and misery she had lately sustained.

Imogen had scarcely risen from her knees, and "*the beauty of holiness*" still shed its seraph expression on her countenance, when the baron entered. The nymph-like simplicity of her attire, presented to his admiring eye such a form as poetical fancy attaches to the idea of Arcadian beauty.

"How much, my lord," said Imogen, "do I owe you for an attention so delicate, so grateful?" casting her eyes over the dress his kindness had provided her, then modestly raised their grateful glances to his.

The baron took her hand, and, seating himself beside her, said : "You mistake, lady ; to me you owe nothing ; I can only claim the merit of construing your blushes into their literal sense : they are ever the eloquence, the rhetoric, which modesty deigns only to use ; and the glow which delicate shame suffuses over the cheek of lovely woman is the sacred sign of v^estal purity, which no man, deserving the name, will dare to violate. Trust me, sweet lady, I am most pleased that our rude camp could afford thee even this garb, though more suited to the chaste simplicity of thy taste than to the lustre of thy rank : but nature has stamp^t her letters patent of nobility on thy soul, and in the elevation of those sentiments, which gives to thy air and countenance their noblest expression ; nor could the shining diadem nor ermined robe of peerage add a greater splendour to the form which the divine light of virtue and the heaven-stolen beam of genius irradiates ! No, to the eye of Montargis, the lady de St. Dorval is not more dignified, more illustrious, than

the meek and humble Novice of St. Dominick." Then, in a tone more tenderly familiar, he added : " Oh ! at the sound of that name, memory like lightning shoots athwart each interval of bliss, and my raptured senses doubt their fidelity as I gaze on the form of *her* whom once to have known is never to forget !"

" Never to forget !" repeated Imogen, with a smile half-reproachful : " Oh, my lord ! had not this strange adventure awakened recollection, memory had soon resigned the last fading remembrance of the Novice of St. Dominick. Whate'er the wayward destiny which led you to seek an asylum, in humble guise, within the chateau de Montmorell, whether the romantic spirit of adventure or the wild vicissitude of war, unvanquished by that destiny, you ever rendered it subservient to the purposes of the moment : you stooped to assimilate yourself to those you might have awed into conscious inferiority ; and your mind, like gold, which dissolving in baser metal blends itself with each minuter particle, yet still retains its own pure quality unalloyed, ductile but undegraded, betrayed itself well versed in the world's subtilizing school. Cheating time where you could not enjoy it, o'er the dreary path of solitude and unvaried sequestration, you scattered those flowers of dalliance which faded as they fell. Such, my lord, were your passing courtesies considered : sweet, perhaps, but not permanent ; grateful, but transient."

The "eloquent blood" of Imogen ever betrayed the emotion which dictated the sentiment of her eloquent lips : the oblique reference to those tender professions of the baron, which his after-neglect had proved to be fleeting as the sighs which had stolen amidst their "honed words," rosed the cheek of Imogen with "the virgin crimson of modesty" and the deeper flush of pride ; while the faint smile which hung upon the pensive softness of the baron's ardent gaze, seemed to owe its existence to that pleasure awakened by a reproach, which a tender, but wounded interest only could have excited.

" Yes," said he, " if I am to be arraigned on the allegation of appearances, I must indeed seem what you

infer I am, the mere worldling, whose heart seeking only temporary gratification, like the inconstant surface of a mirror, receives every impression but retains none. Yet since you have honoured me in the faint recollection of those vows which breathed the passion of a soul devoted, with all its energies, to adore thee, and registered in the face of heaven upon the hand of her whose purity is heaven's type, deem me not, sweet saint, in love a truant: but trust me, that, as the rose's essence precedes and e'en survives its own identical and fair existence, so, ere I beheld thee, I nourished in my bosom's core a germ of love for thee reserved to ripen to perfection; and if it drooped beneath the chill of absence most enforced, believe me that again at sight of thee it blooms, and sheds a fresher odour, than when first thy genial influence flushed on its primy nature. And now, while, in return for thy sweetly interesting and candid detail, I pour the boundless confidence of a soldier's honest and unpractised heart into thine, wilt thou, fair maid, in pity to that heart's weakness, still suffer me to consider my lovely auditress in the light in which I first beheld her, the meek Novice of St. Dominick, not the overawing and illustrious lady de St. Dorval? Oh Imogen! the recollection of the former character will ever awaken the nerve where bliss is bred, while the latter—God of heaven! the daughter of St. Dorval!—Oh fortune! why art thou still of love the unvanquishable enemy? and thou, oh love! why dost thou twine around the heart those ties which breaking break it, yet twine them only for the finger of destiny to sever? But away with reflection! this hour shall be the commemorating æra of love's sweet birth; the expanded wing of joy shall soar in triumph, and guard the heart from care's intrusive gloom; and the sad realities of a fatal conviction shall lie subdued by the rosy influence of sweet illusion; fancy's fairy spell shall convert this warlike shelter into the dearly-remembered gallery of Montmorell, and the dignity of a peeress of France into the soul-dissolving softness of the tender pitying Imogen; who hung, not unmoved, upon the minstrel's last-breathed vow, and whose eyes dropped precious dew the jealousy of love would have wrested

from compassion, but that its insuperable fears forbade the temerity of the golden hope."

Then, after a pause, the baron, casting down his eyes with that air of modesty which seemed to reprehend the necessity which obliged him to become the hero of his own tale, continued: "He who is born the favourite of fortune, who lisps his first accent in the bosom of independence, and is endowed with the command over others before he has been taught the necessity of obtaining it over himself, enters life on its most level path, and cannot be supposed to meet with those incidents with which the vicissitudes of a less smiling destiny abound; which give interest to detail, render egotism venial, and furnish the historian with his most attractive facts, the poet with his brightest images. Rank and fortune were my birth-right. I was born to that which is the aim and object of mankind to obtain; for which every energy of the soul, every faculty of the mind, rushes into exertion: I was born to it; and those faculties, those energies, which might have enabled me to have acquired them, lay dormant, in the want of that necessity which is the primary stimulus of all human action. When consciousness first awakened in my infant mind, it found me reposing on the bosom of beauty: my eyes, from their first discriminating glance, dwelt on the loveliness and harmony of nature in the fairest epitome of her works, woman! Nourished on her smiles, overwhelmed by her caresses, sporting in her arms, catching my lisping accents from her lip of love, my soul received its first impression from the purity, the sublimity, of hers; and what it still possesses of good is but the lingering trace of that sweet indelible impression. Julia de Ribemont resided in my grandfather's family during my mother's life. The long-declining health of that mother gave me constantly to the arms of her beautiful friend; who, on my parent's death, adopted me the child of her affection, while my father returned the kindness even by making her the idol of his own. But,—"

The baron paused: his brow insensibly lost its mild expansion, and contracted its shade over his darkening eyes; and, after a moment's struggle, he resumed;

"But my father was deprived of this object of his homage, and I lost my amiable mother: she was destined to boast a more illustrious title, to become the mother of Imogen. I was but five years of age when I participated in my father's still lamented loss; and memory goes no further than the thrilling recollection of the feelings the insinuating Julia awakened in my young heart: the tears, the lamentations, with which I pursued her flight; or the hatred I conceived against him, who I was soon taught to know had torn her from me. Oh, you to whom the education, the forming of youthful minds is consigned, tremble at the great, the solemn charge you undertake! 'Tis you who fix that radical impression from whence those innumerable branches emerge, whose closely-knit associations become the efficient source of all their virtues, of all their vices. If you would participate in the reward of the former, for the latter you are wholly accountable. The stream of time flows in vain over those traces stamp'd on the youthful heart, interwoven with its flexible fibres; its soft obliterating tide does but ameliorate, but cannot deface. In riper years, when my father spoke of the hereditary feuds of the houses de Montargis and de St. Dorval, he would add, 'And 'twas this man who robbed me of my bride, who deprived thy infant and motherless years of that mild guardian spirit which hovered around thee with more than a mother's tenderness.' Oh! that recollection thus revived breathed a deathless spirit on the spark of discord illumined in my youthful heart."

"A deathless spirit!" instinctively repeated Imogen: "oh, not a deathless spirit;" looking with a mild and deprecating glance in the face of the baron.

The blush which flitted over the cheek of the baron, drew its source from the delicacy he felt he had violated. Avoiding the soft but earnest looks of Imogen, he replied: "I speak, lady, under the influence of my *then* existing feelings, which at that period stole their predominant hue from the colour of their opinions by whom I was surrounded. But to be brief. The activity of my father's mind, his long initiation in all the profoundest mysteries of politics, carried him to Paris; and holding

two high stations at court, successively under the two brothers, Charles the Ninth and Henry the Third, he seldom visited his provincial estates, but left me to be educated at the chateau de Montargis, and to win back that popularity his long absence might eventually forfeit. Placed under the care of a rigid disciple of Luther, and who had been in his youth the friend of that extraordinary reformer, the harshness of my preceptor's mind communicated its chill severity to his taste; and the studies selected for my pursuit were as dissonant to the native tone of my mind, as the disposition and sentiments of my tutor to the feelings of my heart, or the gay hilarity of my temper. He had borne a conspicuous part in those violent controversial struggles which so long tore and disgraced the christian church; and his success had awakened in his mind an ardent passion for subtle argumentation, a love for whatever was difficult to be understood, and an ambition to be supposed capable of comprehending what was in itself unintelligible, which induced him to confine my studies to those works he himself approved, the subtleties of Aristotle's philosophy, or the uninteresting and gladiatorial disputes of modern theologians. The play which such works gave to boyish ingenuity at first fascinated my attention, and I became as bigoted and pedantic as my tutor could desire; but as the light of reason diffused its influence o'er my faculties, as the latent perceptions of taste awakened into refinement, as passion's genial glow shed its influence o'er my heart and senses, I turned revoltingly from the crude regimen prescribed to my eager mind. A sentiment will be easier converted into its opposite, than moderated or restrained into an intermediate degree between the great extremes; and disgust soon pursued the recollection of those studies which I had once engaged in with avidity. The authors of the Augustan day, the elegant poets of modern Italy, succeeded to the philosophy of Aristotle, the theology of Melancthon. I studied the musical systems of Gui d'Arezzo, Jean de Muria, and the more famed theorists of a later day. The works of the celebrated troubadours, Pierre Bidal and Arnaud de

Varvail,* fell into my hands. I studied the Provençal dialect, and recollected I inhaled that air which was once supposed to breathe inspiration. The streams of my native Durance assumed a new and classic interest, and I wandered in poetic transport along the banks of that delicious river, o'er whose swelling waves the spirit of genius had so often floated. I envied those high-priests of gallantry who still awakened the decaying embers of the illustrious order of troubadours in Thoulouse, and still presided o'er the laws of love, of poesy, and song. I even determined to emulate their talents, and to become a candidate for the golden violet instituted by the accomplished Clemence d'Isaure, countess of Thoulouse, as the reward of poetical merit. I hastened to Thoulouse in the habit of a minstrel, and sung those verses to the harp which were the first effusions of my rustic muse. My youth and rank shed an extraneous merit on my lays they intrinsically did not possess: the golden violet was adjudged me; and gratified ambition flushed her triumphs in my young aspiring heart. I was then scarcely sixteen, and the errors of youth, in a literary sense, generally find that toleration which, in a moral one, is so seldom allowed them. My indulgent father participated in my success, and though then at Paris, suffered me to remain at Thoulouse, to perfect myself in the elegant and useful exercises of the sword and horsemanship, until weariness or satiety should cancel the immunity.

"It was at this period I formed a friendship with a young Englishman of rank, Robert Sidney,† the second son of sir Henry Sidney, brother to the immortal sir Philip, and nephew to the favourite of Elizabeth, the celebrated earl of Leicester; who was then at Thoulouse, on his return from Italy by France to England, under the care of his intelligent tutor, Mr. Savill,‡ and accompanied by another young Englishman of fortune, Mr. Ne-

* See a history of the Troubadours, by M. de St. Palaie, finished by the abbé Millot.

† Afterwards earl of Leicester.

‡ See sir Philip Sidney's Letter to his brother Robert.

vill. Fascinated by the manners, the talents, the solid and useful information, which distinguished this little group of foreigners from the frivolous visitants which Italy so frequently sent us, and the volatile and unsteady, though sanguine, characters of the young Provençals, I clung to these amiable strangers, and so far insinuated myself into their favour, as to induce them to accompany me back to Montargis, where they became my guests for some weeks.

“Under the guiding precepts, with the shining example of his illustrious brother, to light him on his way, the younger Sidney had travelled over the greater part of Europe, and was now returning to England, rich in the spoils of his accurate observation on men and manners : and when he dwelt with animation on the scenes through which he had passed, the characters he had mingled with, or the adventures he had encountered, I shrunk back upon myself in conscious inferiority, and secretly reprobated the fond apprehensions of my father, which had confined me so long within the safe limits of a domestic circle. But when my new friend spoke of his illustrious, his all-accomplished brother, who was by many years his elder ; when I learnt that sir Philip Sidney, when little more than my age, had travelled through Europe, commanding attention from every ear, respect from every mind, affection from every heart ; that the proud Austrian viceroy of the Netherlands treated him with more public honours than the ambassadors of sovereigns ; and though a stranger, without title, power, or any of those alluring baits to popularity, he had been in election for the crown of Poland, a circumstance more glorious than if the diadem of a world had encircled his brow by inheritance ; my bosom glowed, my heart beat, I felt as did Cæsar when he read of the juvenile feats of Alexander. I accompanied my English friends to Paris : I thrêw myself at my father’s feet ; conjured him no longer to suffer his son, his only son, to waste the precious years of youth in inglorious indolence ; but to permit me to visit that country which claimed sir Philip Sidney as her son, which then boasted of a Raleigh, an Essex, a Bacon, a Shakspeare ! My entreaties were se-

conded by the pressing instances of my new friends, and a polite invitation from sir Henry Sidney : my father's tenderness yielded to those combined solicitations, and I was suffered to accompany those amiable Englishmen to their native country. I was received at Baynard castle with the cordial welcome which distinguishes the old English hospitality from that of the continent, not only by sir Henry, who had just returned from his third expedition to Ireland as lord-deputy, but by the lady Mary Sidney, a daughter of the illustrious house of Northumberland, and by their incomparable son, on whom nature, fame, and fortune, seemed to vie in showering the choicest favours. As learned in the schools as gallant in the field, as elegantly refined at the levee as unaffectedly endearing in his domestic circle, hyperbole itself must fail in the attempt to do justice to his illustrious character. Although his own poetic genius was sufficient to command immortality; the Mæcenæ of his day, he had the true greatness of mind to encourage merit in others wherever he found it, unbiassed by the narrow views of policy or ostentation. It was at his house I became acquainted with the celebrated Edmund Spenser; his friend John Chalkhill, the pastoral poet; Mr. Fairfax, the elegant translator of Tasso, and William Shakespeare, the first dramatic poet of this or perhaps any other age. There too I became known to sir Philip's friend and relative, the all-accomplished Grevill lord Brooke, who united so much solid learning to all the attractive blandishments of poetical genius; sir Walter Raleigh, of whose universal capacity it has been said, he was born only for what he undertook; the witty sir John Harrington, who has flung over the splendid images of Ariosto the graces of English drapery; and the earl of Essex, the hero of his nation, the idol of his sovereign's heart, and undoubtedly one of the most elegant writers of the day.

"Among those bright Pleiades, a countryman of my own shone a star of no inferior magnitude; but his lustre was rather the reflection of superior virtue than superior talents. The chevalier de Sorville was then a visitor at Baynard castle : he had many years before formed a

connection with sir Philip, when the latter was on his travels; he had met him at Paris during the fatal eve of St. Bartholomew. Of different persuasions, they had been equally active in the cause of humanity, when the bigotry of mistaken religion aimed a vital blow at her heart; till the benevolent temerity of the chevalier rendered him incapable of further exertion, and the perils which surrounded him obliged the young Englishman to seek personal safety in the house of the then English ambassador, the celebrated sir Francis Walsingham.

“As the friend and relative of the count de St. Dorval, I met the cordial advances of the amiable de Sorville with coldness and reluctance. His superior mind smiled compassionately on the prejudice of my boyish unformed character, and to his persevering kindness I now owe the proudest boast of my life, that of being his friend.

“The visit of this virtuous man to England was not merely a visit of friendship or curiosity: his mind still pointing with invariable impulse to the magnetic attraction of benevolence, he had come to England in the hope of ameliorating the fate of the Hugonot emigrants, whom the cruelty of Philip II had expatriated from the Netherlands, by his interest with the British minister through the medium of the Sidney family. He had also then formed a resolution of visiting most of the jails in Europe, whose wretched inhabitants have since experienced the generosity of his nature, (to which his open purse was ever inadequate) and the effects of his medical skill, which his study of physic had rendered eminent.

“Need I add that, in such society, every moment was more precious than an age of common-place existence? that every better faculty of my young and ardent mind was roused into exertion; and that spirit of emulation, breathing o’er those embers of nature’s fire, which the lulling powers of a flattering fortune had suffered almost to become extinct, animated my wishes to become all that I most admired in those whose illustrious characters made me feel the inconsequence of rank and riches, unaccompanied by virtue, talents, or genius? My father allowed me a brilliant establishment; and at my own desire my preceptors were English. While with the

younger Sidney I pursued the liberal studies marked out for him by his all-intelligent brother, or practised those manly and fashionable exercises in which the young English nobility excel, sir Philip Sidney was appointed governor of Flushing by Elizabeth. His departure shed a gloom, not only over his family, but his country, that seemed prophetic: for, after having signalized himself in a manner so heroical as awakened even the admiration of his enemies, at the battle of Zutphen, where his third horse was killed under him, he received a mortal wound, of which he languished twenty-five days, and died in the flower of his age, the meridian of his glory.

“ After a residence in England of nearly two years,—a residence prolonged by my father’s wishes, as France was at that period the scene of general warfare and civil discord,—I returned to Paris in 1589, anxious to follow in the track of heroism marked out by the illustrious Henry of Navarre, but tied by my family interest to the house of Valois. On the side of the king of Navarre I dared not draw my sword; against him I would not. Almost personally attached to this amiable monarch, worshipping the heroic virtues of his character, convinced of the justice of his claims, and compassionating those injuries which the power and hatred of Catherine had so long heaped on him, I had no alternative but to be an inactive spectator of his unremitted sufferings; or to fly in the face of my father and my king, and join the standard of the persecuted, but ever magnanimous Henry.

“ It was not till the two kings embraced on the plain of Tours, that I had the happiness of judging from actual observation, of the illustrious virtues of that character, which even the exaggerater Fame had but faintly blazoned. Shortly after Henry III was murdered; and my father was among the first of the nobility who acknowledged Henry IV, as the lawful sovereign of France, and attached themselves to his service. Humbly following in that luminous path o’er which the splendid achievements of the king shed their glorious rays, from that moment I have revolved round the monarch as a cynosure of valour, by whose beams I might hope to

shine with reflected light. I have fought beneath his eye, in all those engagements which the obstinacy of faction has multiplied almost beyond calculation: and that I have been publicly distinguished by his unmerited notice, is a circumstance less grateful to my feelings and my heart, than that I have been honoured by his private attention and personal regard. But while I thus weary your patience, my indulgent auditress, by a tale so divested of interest, let me hasten to that period whose golden aspect shines resplendent o'er the subject hours of time, and lives eternal in the records of the heart; that sweet period in which I felt a new sense of existence steal o'er my awakening senses, in which I first beheld Imogen of Montmorell.

“ A love of arms has been the unalienable inheritance of a Montargis, since first in the fields of Palestine they received the honour of knighthood from St. Louis. Deep-versed in the achievements of the heroes of France, from the prowess of Charlemagne to the heroic deeds of Henry IV, I burned to draw my sword with emulating vigour, and to gather those laurels in my youth; on which the brow of age could repose in the proud consciousness of self-approbation. But circumstances, already enumerated, prevented my engaging in the civil wars of France; and the intestine discords which agitated Italy, and which were rather the struggling efforts of banditti for the supremacy of slaughter and rapine, offered no colour of excuse to a man of honour to join in them: besides, my ardent passion for arms was tempered by a sentiment which had been the object of early reflection, strengthened into principle, that he who draws an *offensive* sword, who endeavours to purchase fame by the wanton destruction of his species, even though success sheds her roses o'er the bloody track of his deathful career, and the wreath of conquest blushes round his victor brow, is but an *assassin*. Let the sword of the valiant leap from its scabbard, in the cause of oppression; let it deal destruction to those who would violate the liberty of their country, infringe upon the sanctity of its laws, who would aim a blow at the life of a wise and virtuous sovereign, or impiously dare to profane the sa-

cred; the immutable, rights of mankind: but let it repose for ever, with the spirit of unawakened vengeance, in honourable peace, rather than stain its polished surface with the blood of the invalid, the enslaved, or unresisting."

A brighter glow burnt on the cheek of the baron as he spoke, the animation of his eyes kindled into radiance, and the tones of his voice rose beyond their ordinary round and harmonious pitch: then after a pause, while the kindling countenance of Imogen reflected back the fire of his own, and her half-moving lips seemed to articulate those sentiments which her heart so truly, so sympathetically echoed, he added, modestly casting down his eyes:

"Some little opposition of sentiment and conduct brought on the displeasure of the *then* reigning king,* and the strongest disapprobation of my father. I was sent, a willing exile, to the chateau de Montargis. Fleet and pleasant were the hours of my unbroken solitude; the soft recollections of the heart gave me back those objects so beloved in childhood, and awakened a lingering thrill of those transports which usher in the golden dawn of life. Music and poetry again received my homage; nor did their blandishments alone occupy my time and thoughts. No baron in the south of France boasted a more numerous vassalage than my father: brought up and educated amongst the young serfs of the extensive domain of Montargis, frequently the participator of their rural sports, and their competitor in rural games, I had acquired an interest in their hearts, which neither my rank nor fortune could have endowed me with. France boasted not a bolder or more vigorous race of peasantry. The chain which feudal immunity vested in the hands of power sat lightly o'er them; and the spirited ardour even of comparative independence warmed their minds, and mingled its spirit with that true provincial hilarity which their skies for ever blue, their gales for ever genial, inspire.

"I always delighted in that antique purity of morals,

that still-retained character of ancient manners, and that still-cherished taste for poesy and song, which from its first colonization distinguished Provence; and I now delighted in embodying those of its animated and hardy youths, whom at a future day I should claim as my own immediate subjects, into a little military phalanx, more precious to my heart than that of Alexander's, all-invincible as it was, could have been to his: for every artery of that heart swelled with a kind of collateral affection for those, who would as willingly have sacrificed their lives for me, as I would have laid down mine for them. Well skilled in the theory of tactics and use of arms, though little versed in the practice, my own unwearied endeavours, and the assistance of some veteran officers belonging to the garrison of Avignon, soon rendered my little army one of the best-disciplined in the realm. The vigour of constitution, the ardour of youth, the spirited vivacity of their province, all conduced to perfect them into dauntless and able soldiers.

"Accustomed alternately to wield the instruments of war or the implements of agriculture, they were now enabled to defend the fields they cultivated; and, proud of their newly acquired prerogative, laid down those arms they wielded during the winter season, and resumed the cutting-knife of the summer vintage. When time and the fond solicitations of nature restored me to my father's heart, I hastened to Paris, and continued in the new king's army,* hurried on by the perpetual vicissitudes of civil war, almost forgetful of my little provincial forces; when the discomfiture of his majesty before the walls of Rouenne, and his doubtful hopes of success before those of Neufchatel, called for the most vigorous exertions on the part of his adherents. Several of the nobility had flown to their castles, armed their vassals, and returned to the field with these hastily embodied and ill-organized troops,† who had only animal

* Henry IV.

† In the memoirs of the duke de Sully, we find that faithful minister more than once flying from the royal camp to the chateau de Roigni, and returning to the king with men and provisions.

courage to supply the deficiency of military skill. It was then the recollection of my *corps de reserve* started to my mind; and in the same moment they were offered and accepted by the king. The difficulties however I had to encounter were such, as those noblemen who had brought their auxiliary troops to the royal camp were not exposed to.

"I had to lead a considerable body from the most southern to almost the most northern part of France, and through those provinces thickly scattered over with the enemy's forces: but to the adventurous mind of youth, each obstacle is but a resistless lure to hazardous enterprize.

"The king, with fatherly solicitude, warned me of the perils that hung on the undertaking; but his tender anxiety, which buried the interest of the sovereign in the safety of the subject, only acted as a stimulus to my intention.* Disguised in the habit of a Provençal minstrel whom I had brought with me to the camp, mounted on his gaudily caparisoned horse, with my harp and professional badge before me, I left the walls of Neufchatel on the day that his majesty withdrew his army. The native romance of my character, the novelty of my adventure, the sanguine glow of expectation, and the flushing hopes of success, swelled my heart with pleasure, and animated the spirit of enterprize almost beyond the bound of temerity. Not content with passing in safety along the skirts of the enemy's camp during my first day's journey, I determined on the second to follow the example of Alfred, and, under cover of my minstrelsy, plunge into the heart of the Leaguers' army, become master of their intentions, the strength of their forces, and, rich in the spoils of my ingenuity, return to the king before I proceeded to Provence. But not to weary thee, sweet lady,

* During the civil wars of France this romantic masquerading in perilous exigencies was by no means unfrequent; and the chivalrous enthusiasm of the times had communicated its peculiarities not only to the military spirit, but even to the amorous passion of the day. Thus we find Henry the Great disguised as a peasant, bending beneath a heavy burden, passing through the heart of the enemy's army, to visit his beautiful mistress, Gabrielle D'Estrées, at her father the lord de Courcy's castle in Picardy.

with the loitering details of *egotism*, suffice it to say, that having entered the camp, been loaded with the caresses of the soldiery, and even introduced to the tent of the heroic prince of Parma and the duke de Mayenne, I was discovered by an officer of the royal army who had lately gone over to the League; and, according to the inviolable laws of war, I was condemned to expiate my imprudence by my life. One alternative only was left me, to unite myself and my interests to those of the League.

"To you I need not say, I was prepared to die: but the policy of the League gave deliberation to all their measures, and, instead of being led to instant death, I was conveyed to the castle of N——, a strong hold of the League, and strictly guarded. The only indulgence allowed me was my harp. Tortured by the insupportable agonies of that suspense which my doubtful fate awakened, torn by the cruel supposition of my father's sufferings for my loss, pressed to the earth by that profound disappointment which hung on the death of my sanguine hopes, and weary of a confinement which no friendly visitation enlivened, no social intercourse amused, in the strains of my favourite and national instrument I strove to lull the sad perturbations of my mind, the cruel disappointment of my hopes. It was on the last evening of my first month's confinement that, seating myself at the grates of my prison casement, I drew my harp towards me, and, sunk by the oppressive conviction that, while my country and my king called for my exertions, while my heart throbbed with ardour, while every nerve thrilled with irritation, I was wasting life away in the confines of a prison, with no hope of release but what a threatened death held out, I struck a few low chords, and murmured out the plaintive sonnet of Tasso, written during his long and unjust imprisonment, and which so simply, so affectingly, depicts the sorrows of his heart.

"Tu che vai in Pindo
Ivi pende mia citra ad un cipresso
Salutala in mio home e dille poi
Chio son dagli anni e da fortuna oppresso."

"Tears, such as those which haply in the bitterness of

his heart fell from the eyes of the Italian bard as he indicted these lines, fell on the chords of my harp as I sung them ; and, vanquished by the hopeless influence of despondency, my hands fell from the instrument, the air died on my lips. At that moment a voice without the grate took up the unfinished air, and answered to my plaints in the well-known dialect of my native province. If my recollection assists me right, the sonnet ran thus :

“ Let not hope expire in the heart of the valiant. What suffering is supportable, if that which arises from our virtue and our courage is not to be endured ? Montargis is in the hands of his enemies ; but a power higher than they possess hovers round him with the wings of safety. Sweet and omnipotent is its influence ; it shall rescue him from danger, and plunge him into a slavery more precious than freedom, whose fetters are roses, whose —— ”

The baron suddenly stopt ; then casting down his eyes, added : “ But the rest of this wild and mysterious strain has escaped recollection. Suffice it to say, that while I hung in amazement on the sound it suddenly ceased. When hope illumines her lamp in the cell of captivity, the dungeon’s noxious vapour and chilling gloom evaporate, and the captive revels in the sweet anticipation of ideal liberty ; despair flies his heart, and smiling expectation smooths the pensive furrow of his care-knit brow. From the moment I heard those strains of native melody, which embodied the belief of a speedy emancipation, I became insensible to the shackles of my froward destiny. Mysterious as were the sentiments of the song, they lured back hope to my sinking heart ; and in a variety of wild surmises, vague expectations, and flattering thoughts, passed away a night despair no longer rendered wakeful. The impatient weariness of suspense hung heavily on the lagging hours of the succeeding day, and my heart welcomed in the pensive approach of evening with a throb of rapture long unknown to its languid pulsation. Again I seated myself at the casement, struck a few chords on my harp, and accompanied a provincial air with my voice. I paused in all the anxiety of intense

expectation, but no note of sympathy echoed back the strain. My heart trembled o'er the wreck of my hopes.

"Again I played; again I paused, but paused in vain; and despair and disappointment rose over the ruin of my treacherous expectations: and yet, ere the first faint beam of morning played through the grating of my prison-window, free as the fragrant air I breathed, I found myself a league from the town of N——. It seemed the work of magic, and conviction almost refused its suffrage to the testimony of the senses."

"And by what extraordinary means, my lord," interrupted Imogen, with a look and accent of intense curiosity, "did you so suddenly regain your freedom?"

The rich colouring of the baron's cheek flushed to the deepest tints of crimson. "Pardon me," said he in a voice of hesitation: "over the mystery of my emancipation suffer the finger of silence to weave her impenetrable veil: 'tis honour that commands, gratitude that imposes it; and delicacy forbids that revelation pride might triumph to effect." The baron paused and sighed; Imogen caught the warm infection of his blush, sighed back his sigh, and pursued his downcast eye with a glance in which no common curiosity, no moderate interest, shone; then hastily withdrawing her all-demanding gaze from the uplifted eye of the baron, she bowed her head, and he continued: "During the tedious three months which in desponding inactivity I passed in the limits of my prison's cell, the opposing armies of France, led by their respective brave and noble chiefs, had undergone a series of warlike vicissitudes, which, perplexed and confused, mocked the power of accurate delineation to record. To the sieges of Rouen and Neufchatel succeeded several splendid victories gained by the king over the Leaguers, who owed their final preservation to that wonderful retreat of their general the duke of Parma, which fame shall trumpet to admiring ages till her last blast shall die into eternity. It was during that period of awful suspense that the two armies lay scattered along the shores of the Seine; that of the king lulled into proud but delusive security by recent success, that of the league on the

eager watch to seize some golden opportunity of redressing their losses and escaping the vigilance of the watchful conqueror; that the duke of Parma, at the head of his forces, in the space of one short night, crossed the rapid Seine over a slight and precarious bridge of boats; and to this astonishing stratagem the illustrious hero owed the preservation of his glory, and, what must have been dearer to the heart of the man, the safety and lives of the forces he commanded.

“ The following morning presented to the astonished gaze of the self-rapt royalists a scene that appeared almost under the influence of magical operation; a desolated plain, where a few hours before a splendid armament spread its numerous and gaudy multitude, now appeared to their eye unmarked even by a single trace of that pompous retinue of war, the splendid panoply of military establishment, which in the sunbeam of the preceding evening glittered to their eyes, or of the busy bustling murmur of a camp’s unbridled license, which the stillness of the midnight breeze had waisted to their ears.

“ An action so congenial to the spirit of the king, even though performed by an enemy, called forth in his generous heart the liveliest sympathy of admiration; and the successful stratagem of his rival, far from depressing his spirits, only served as a stimulus to an exertion of corresponding heroism. He instantly assembled a council of war, and proposed the immediate pursuit of the enemy over the narrow pass of the Pont de l’Arch. But the council of Henry, like his army, was composed of those whose views, interests, religions, and principles, were equally opposed, and ever kept alive a mutual distrust and difference of opinion with respect to measures, which frequently frustrated the best-designed projects of their king.

“ In the instance of this proposal only, however, the crude contrarieties of faction seemed to blend into one united mass of opposition against the bold and politic measure proposed by their king. The heart of Henry received a profound wound by this opposition; but the vaulting hopes of his magnanimous emulation were

forced to swim with the torrent of popular opinion; and that year's campaign being concluded, he resolved to turn the opinion of his council to some account, by granting a truce to the harassing fatigues of war, and giving that repose to his troops that would cheer and invigorate them for future action. With that lavish generosity, which his liberal nature so frequently suffers to degenerate into an imprudence by which he is ever a sufferer, he distributed all the money he possessed among his soldiers, and permitted the officers to return to their respective homes, until the urgency of the times should again call on their exertions. Then, determining to seize on this temporary emancipation from the blood-stained shackles of war, and convert it into an æra of blissful enjoyment, the king resigned himself to another species of bondage, whose chains are of roses, but of roses not always thornless. The royal Henry, ever alive to the allurements of pleasure when the claims of duty did not oppose her witchcraft spell, was at this period in the first stage of that passion which the beautiful Gabrielle d'Estrees still keeps alive in his usually inconstant heart. His mind, harassed by the wearying oppositions of faction, the changeful anxiety of war's vicissitudes, sought a solace in those rich blisses love alone bestows; and, accompanied by a few chosen friends, he set out for Picardy,* the residence of his mistress, to gratify the longings of his enamoured heart. Such was the situation of affairs when I fled from the prison of N——. Instead of going to

* Henry the Fourth, when in pursuit of the prince of Parma, stole away from the army, and went to visit, for the first time, the beautiful Gabrielle at Couvres. He contented himself with eating bread and butter at the gate, that he might not raise any suspicions in her father: afterwards, mounting his horse, he said he was going towards the enemy, and the fair one should see what deeds he would perform through his passion for her.

See *Pere Mathieu*, vol. ii, p. 59.

Mademoiselle d'Estrees, the most beautiful woman of the age she lived in, was daughter to Antoined'Estrees, lord of Couvres, of the most ancient family in Picardy. She was forced by her father to marry Nicholas d'Amerval, lord of Liancourt, but afterwards continued to live publicly as the king's mistress till her death.

Picardy, where my father held the government of a town, and the king then resided, I determined to continue the route, and prosecute the intention which first led me from the camp.

"To thee I will confess that the experienced disappointment of my romantic views had not yet dried up the source of enthusiasm from whence they sprung; that I was still enamoured of a project which had for its object the service of my king; and that I felt myself bound to realize a voluntary offer made with a confident certainty of performance, even at a risk imminent as that I had already encountered. I determined therefore to proceed to Provence, embody there my little phalanx, and march to Picardy to join the king, who it was already rumoured intended to re-assemble his forces in that province, where he had as yet only shewn himself in the lists of love. The only pang to which my heart was alive, at that moment of sanguine expectation, was that awakened by the recollection of my father, who was still uncertain of the fate of his only son; while I was equally uncertain whether my adventure and imprisonment had reached his ears; but I preferred prolonging his anxiety a little to disappointing his hopes.

"The sun had not imbued the horizon with his golden waves when I found myself a league and a half from the town of N——. Here, ascending an eminence, I paused, and turned my eyes towards the lofty turrets of my late prison, which, bearing their dark-grey heads above the morning mists, rose on my gaze, like the gloomy visions of my departed sufferings. All I had endured there rushed across my mind, in comparative force with the feelings and situation of the present moment. Oh, my sweet friend! liberty, like health, must be lost or suspended ere its blessings can be truly estimated. He who has ne'er inhaled the dungeon's poisonous vapour; who has ne'er thrown his dim and hopeless glance o'er the viewless space of its dark and narrow limits; who has ne'er hung upon the joyless stillness of its awful silence, to catch one wished-for human sound; or cast an eager longing look through the grated loop-hole of his cell, to catch one beam of long-excluded light, feels not,

conceives not, how much on the enjoyment of natural and rational liberty rests the primary source of all human felicity; and that each returning day, which gives the light of heaven to his eye, the breath of nature to his senses, the power of renovated and unrestricted motion to his frame (blessings insensibly, unthankfully enjoyed), renews that covenant by which, in the first moment of existence, God endowed his creatures with a natural source of happiness and enjoyment. As I turned my eyes from the gloomy aspect of my prison's awful turrets, and looked round on the sweet and sublime scene that even to infinity spread before my delighted gaze; when the dew of heaven shed its refreshing tears on my aching head; when the sun's kindling glories flung their cheering rays around me, and the morning's vigorous fragrant breeze breathed health and spirit o'er my senses; when all I felt, and all I beheld, partook of the perfection, the harmony, the love of Him by whom they were created; even in that moment of sublimated feeling I struck a few chords on my harp, still the companion of my wanderings, and felt as if inspiration descended round me from heaven. I knelt and played, with emotions such as the royal prophet felt when religious enthusiasm awoke his harp's inspired strains; while the tear of rapture and of gratitude dried on my burning cheek. Yes, lady, 'tis to thee I will confess what the world would deride as romantic weakness; to thee confess, that a soldier's often blood-stained cheek blushed not to receive the tear religious gratitude had extracted; for it is for a mind like thine, only to feel those pure, those sublime emotions which rarefy and sublimate the soul of man to an essence of heaven itself."

"Oh!" exclaimed Imogen, while her half-raised eye floated in tears of sympathy, "to few are given such refined capabilities of feeling; to those only whom heaven creates symbolic of its own perfection, connecting, by an intermediate degree of excellence, the Almighty to his creatures, man to God!"

The soul-beaming eyes of the baron pursued the kindling animation, the increasing tenderness, of Imogen's looks; and after a pause, such as the heart and

imagination love to prolong, yet which covered the cheek of Imogen with blushes, and communicated a soft and indefinable agitation to the air and countenance of the baron, he replied: "If the rapture such feelings awaken can admit of an extraneous increase, it is bestowed by the sweet consciousness that those refined powers of emotion and thought are not a solitary undivided bliss, but, like every other joy of the soul, rise in the scale of rapture in proportion as it is participated. Oh God! who that has a heart to *feel* has *not* felt the vast difference that lies between the enjoyment which wakes into solitary existence, and dies as it lives, and that thrilling transport which steals its birth from the glowing, the refined communication of two kindred souls? Then, Imogen, when even the most elevated power of language refuses its expression to the vivid, the heart-dissolving feelings, then, my sweet friend! when the eye's soul-sent glance, the cheek's vital blush, the sigh's rapturous heave, and even (seizing her hand) the pulse's kindred throb, perpetuate the silent communion, such as the ignorant and unfeeling suppose disembodied spirits only hold —." The baron paused: the hand he held trembled in his ardent grasp; the melting look his eye pursued shrunk beneath the expression of his burning glance; the heart to which he appealed throbbed with soft but obvious violence. "Imogen! oh Imogen!" he added, raising her hand to his lips; "suffer me even now to believe we illustrate the sweetest truth the heart ever subscribed to; for now, oh sure, we feel together!"

It was not till after a silence, a dangerous silence, of some minutes, that Imogen released a hand that blushed with the warm impression of the baron's lip; and, with a faint smile and tremulous accent, demanded if he believed the interest his story had awakened in her bosom did not suffer from this long interruption? The baron, starting as from a dream "that rapt him in Elysium," endeavoured to collect his scattered thoughts, and re-assumed his detail: "I continued my solitary way with a rapid and silent step, pausing at intervals to catch the fancied sound of pursuit, and then hurrying on towards a small town on the frontiers of Champagne, which I in-

tended to make the goal of that day's journey. This I reached in safety before sunset. Here I purchased a horse with what money I had left, and wrote to my father.* Refreshed by the first night's sweet and undisturbed slumber I had long enjoyed (while fancy still gave to my ear the accustomed foot-fall of my gúard), I arose before dawn; and mounting my new-purchased steed, and slinging my harp behind me, I proceeded on my journey with renovated strength and spirits. The day was mild and beautiful, and I was met by several groups of peasants, who demanded specimens of my tuneful art, and endeavoured, by many hospitable offers, to lure me to their humble dwellings; while they lamented the decay of my profession, which was fast falling into disrepute. The night of this day I passed in the cottage of a wood-cutter, whose roof resounded to the echo of that merriment and festivity my harp awakened; while his numerous and charming family overwhelmed me with gratitude and caresses for the amusement I afforded them. When wearied with dancing, they crowded round me, and demanded the tale of other times; and their eager, their expressive countenances glowed as they listened to the feats of genii and fairii, of giants and warriors; the young clinging to me in all the energy of unsubdued feeling and animated curiosity, the old listening in sober and undivided attention. Never did I feel more strongly how much sweeter it is to give than to receive pleasure; never did I triumph more in the possession of my little talents than in that moment, when I felt conscious that it was to their influence alone I owed the admiration, the respect, the welcome, that shone in every countenance. The smiles I awakened were not the sycophantic leer of interest paid to fortune; the embrace I received was not the pressure of servility allured by rank. Oh! the vast pleasure in being loved, in being respected for one's self alone!" The baron fixed his impassioned glance on Imogen's face, and read in the expression of her eloquent countenance the corresponding sentiments

* Regular posts were first established in France by Henry the Fourth.

of her full heart ; then with a long-drawn sigh continued :

“ Pleased with my adventure, I courted a similar fate the following night, and again became the nocturnal guest of a peasant’s dwelling ; and the novelty which an intercourse with these children of nature possessed shed an extraneous charm over the pleasure such an intercourse awakened. The sphere of my (hitherto limited) affections extended to receive the sentiments these my lowly brethren excited ; and I felt the natural affinity as strong which united me to the poor and lowly as when it bound me only to my equals ; convinced that virtue and genius are the only natural distinctions which raise man above his fellows. It was on the evening of my third day’s journey that I found my musing mind had led me some leagues from my destined route ; and that, instead of pursuing my way to the southern skirts of Champagne, I had taken the road to the central part of the province, over which several marauding parties of the enemy’s troops were scattered. The sun had already withdrawn his last beams from the summits of the highest trees of a forest which lay to the east, when, from an opening in that part of the road which flanked a hill near whose brow I rode, I perceived a numerous patrol crossing the path I was about to take. Sensible of my danger, I turned my horse’s head, doubled the angle of the hill, and, while I fancied the sound of pursuit every moment met my ear more distinctly, I reached the borders of the forest. At that instant the deep red clouds which for some time had floated, like vast meteors, in the atmosphere, darkened into impenetrable gloom ; then drawing together with electric force, burst with a horrid crash, and discharged torrents of rain, while the thunder’s distant growl gradually deepened into peals that seemed to shake the foundation of the earth, and the gloom of impenetrable darkness was at intervals made visible by streams of living fire. Scared by a flash of lightning, my wild and ill-trained steed plunged madly on, and, before I could check his headlong course, I found myself in the centre of the forest. Here I alighted, threw my horse’s bridle over a withered stump, and,

covering my little harp with my mantle, proceeded to the shelter the wide-spreading branches of a tree afforded; when the animal, frightened by some electric fire that sunk into the earth at his feet, snapt his bridle, and fled with a velocity that mocked the hope of pursuit.

"While labouring under the unpleasant sensations such an accident and such a situation were calculated to awaken, I perceived, through the dripping foliage, a ray of light the surrounding darkness rendered conspicuous. Its dusky hue convinced me it was emitted from some distant casement; and, animated by the hope of finding an asylum for the night, I struggled through the briars and underwood that opposed my passage; and, after an hour's painful walk, pursuing the trembling beacon that at intervals wholly disappeared, I found myself beneath the ramparts of a vast and ancient castle. The lights passing and repassing in the casements told me its inhabitants had not yet retired to rest. This was a golden moment for an adventurous spirit; for had not necessity and extreme fatigue urged me to entreat admission, the genius of romance would have lured me to the attempt. Hitherto my talents and address had only won on the hearts of benevolent ignorance: I was now to exert their influence in a higher sphere. I unmuffled my harp, and, though it was something injured by the wet, yet I produced some full vibrations from its chords, and accompanied a pathetic provincial air with my voice."

The colour deepened in the cheek of Imogen as her interest every moment increased with the baron's detail. Surely, thought she, it was that sweet strain which lured me to the casement of lady Magdelaine's study.

The baron continued: "In a few minutes I heard the grating of a loop-hole over a postern-gate removed. Thither I bent my steps, and struck up a lively air. In a few minutes I distinguished the murmuring of voices; and, in the pause of my strains, a female accent demanded who I was, and what was my business? My answer was couched in the usual address of a wandering minstrel. I became an earnest suppliant for admission, and with success. I was received in a vast Gothic hall by a crowd of domestics of both sexes, who hailed my

appearance with a riotous gaiety that spoke me a long-wished-for guest. While I tuned my harp, the loquacious intendant of the chateau informed me I was in the ancient castle of the lady Magdelaine de Montmorell, the most noble, puissant, learned, and pious lady in France, but who possessed withal no very favourable opinion of those who gave themselves up to mirth and pastime. The apprehensions, however, awakened by their lady's aversion to such enjoyments were soon subdued by my harp's lively tones, and some comic romances gleaned from the scattered minstrelsy of Provence, with a *farandole* and other dances, the gay impulsive propensities of a French heart, a French foot can never resist. Their mistress's displeasure was no longer remembered; in a moment all was motion and hilarity around me, and my heart throbbed with corresponding emotions of pleasure. It was in the midst of this gay forgetfulness of all restriction that the commandatory message of the lady Magdelaine annihilated our thronging joys, and I was shortly after summoned to her presence. Although I was not personally known to the lady Magdelaine, I was not ignorant of her family, her character, her political and religious bigotry. Her brother I knew had been one of the staunchest adherents to the League, and a private animosity as well as a public difference of opinion had subsisted between him and my father; I was not, therefore, totally divested of apprehension when I appeared at the door of her *paladium*: and while I shunned the danger of her fixed and penetrating gaze, my incautious glance was rivetted on eyes where lurked a greater but a sweeter peril; for then I first beheld Imogen, like the beautifully embodied spirit of Peace hovering o'er the throne of Discord. Thy fair arm leaned on the back of the sybil's chair, and on that fair arm reposed a fairer face, shaded by a veil whose dark drapery increased by contrast the snowy lustre of thy complexion, the beamy radiance of thine eye. Oh! it was a sweet picture; and memory, true to its interesting charms, has oft restored it to my eye in all its primitive beauty, in all its dangerous softness, every feature animated by the fire of genius, every tint softened

by the influence of sensibility, and the bright illuminations of mind irradiating the countenance of seraph innocence. Often, too, has remembrance lingered on that after-moment, when thine eye's soft glance first mingled with the ardent gaze of mine, when my ears received those sublime and eloquent sentiments which sunk to my soul, and flattered me in the fond belief that in thee I had at last found the essence of myself. Oh, my sweet auditress! a thousand times since that moment of heart-thrilling emotion, when I have listened to the stale and hacknied precepts of dogmatic morality, the crude and unimportant exhortations of religious bigotry, issuing from the bold declamatory lips of the popular pulpit orator, which neither liberalized the mind nor touched the heart, how often have I exclaimed, Why are not all preachers like the Novice of St. Dominick, at once the example and emblem of the pure and elevated virtue she teaches? or why is not that sex, whose lips are imbued with the spirit of persuasion, sent to us as the sweet missionaries of piety and virtue? How irresistible then were the lures of consummate excellence!

"Although my glowing imagination had often offered up its homage to the charms of woman, my heart as yet remained untouched. Had Imogen been merely beautiful, haply it had remained so still: had I only beheld her lovely in her modest silence, as on the night of my first appearance in the study of lady Magdelaine, the morning would have witnessed my departure: but it was that morning that a happy circumstance (shall I call it so?) betrayed to me her mind's superior beauty. The spell of genius, of virtue, was omnipotent; I bowed to the magic of their influence, aided by the powerful charm of youth and loveliness, of tenderness and sensibility. There was but one spot for me in the creation: that spot was the residence of Imogen; and I became a successful suppliant to breathe the same air she inhaled, to enjoy a temporary blissful existence beneath the eyes of her from whom I seemed to receive it. I reflected not that it was the son of the proud baron de Montargis who lived but for the orphan Novice of St. Dominick. No! my idea of love, like every other I had formed

amidst the embowering shades, the sweet solitudes of Provence, partook of that enthusiasm which the world's phlegm calls romance, but without which there is no love. Oh! hadst thou ever felt the eager throbbings of a heart that long had vainly sought its kindred heart, the tender longings of a soul that languished for its heaven-assorted mate, thy modest incredulity, that now averts thine eye and pales thy cheek, would not thus start at that excess of passion which arose from the dear conviction of having found in thee my long-sought better self, assimilating, yet superior to all in myself most valued. The frail sophisticated daughters of fashion shrunk in the scale of comparison with Imogen even to the last degree. Their vivacity bordering on licentiousness, their learning (when possessed) degenerating to pedantry, their wit to slander, their blandishment to levity, disgusted most when most exerted to delight; while Imogen alone realised the lovely vision of feminine excellence my heart and imagination had made the standard of my hopes. Dignity without pride, simplicity without folly, nature united to intelligence, sensibility to gaiety, tenderness to wit, and learning to humility, added to beauty without vanity, and the graces without affectation, were what my ambitious hopes long sought, and found at last in thee. My lady, look not thus incredulously on me; for trust me, I chatter not the frothy nothings of a coxcomb school: it is a soldier's honest unsophisticated heart that pours the treasure of its confidence into thine. Was not the faithful homage of that heart attested by the incongruous conduct it governed? The flame of glory, that had till then burnt fiercely there, became extinguished, and o'er its dying embers rose love's softer fires. Dead to the calls of my country, the service I had promised, and still owed my king, the voice of passion only won my soul's attention. Rapt in love's delusive dream, to gratify the vague and indefinite desires of my heart, I became a household drudge, the instrument of female whim and female pedantry in its last stage of dotage and folly; and a smile, a glance, from Imogen, was the reward of an age of self-denial, of weariness, and disgust. Deep-versed in all the insidious se-

phistry of love, my heart perpetually furnished unanswerable arguments to the suggestions of my prudence: it enumerated those heroes who had subdued their desire of glory to gratify the sweeter ambition of vanquishing a tender, a sensible heart. Last on the list appeared the ever-enamoured Henry: Why, when the flame of glory burned brightest round him, did he fly from victory's loud plaudits in the fields of *Coutras*, but to lay the colours he had taken at the feet of the beautiful countess de Guiche, in whose eyes only he sought his immortality? Why did he conclude an hasty and imprudent truce with his crafty enemy, but in his ardent impatience to enter on a more endearing treaty with the young and lovely de Tignonville? And why, even now, when almost certain success lures him to the pursuit of his active enemy, does he abandon the promised conquest, and at the feet of Gabrielle d'Estrées fondly own himself the conquered? Yes, said I, be thou, immortal hero, in all, as in thy rank, my great superior; but in love, though thou art Passion's warmest child, I will get goal for goal with thee."

"My lord, my lord," interrupted Imogen, blushing, distressed, and yet delighted, "you forget that it was an history of your life, not of your sensations, you had entered on; admitting such sensations were ever awakened in your heart by an object, who feels herself unworthy, as she is incredulous, of the honour assigned her."

"I understand you, lady," said the baron reproachfully; "the daughter of the count de St. Dorval is weary of listening to the progressive influence of that passion, Imogen of Montmorell did not once disdain to acknowledge she had inspired. Oh Imogen! do you then forget that evening, which in the records of my memory holds a distinct place from the cold account of time, when panting, blushing, in all thy soul-dissolving modesty, those eyes, in tender languishment, raised their melting glance to mine; and when I swore I loved, they bade me not despair? when, for the first and last time, I folded thee to an heart, whose every pulse in love's sweet sympathy beat true to thine?"

Agitated, overwhelmed with confusion, in an accent half impassioned, half reproachful, she tremulously replied: "No, my lord, I have not forgot that evening; yet had I learnt the lesson thy example taught me, I had long, long since, forgot both it and thee." The warm tear which wounded affection sent to her eye, her pride forbid to stain the indignant blush that burnt on her cheek: it swam a prisoner in its circling orbit. In the ardent gaze with which the baron pursued the fugitive emotions that flitted o'er the countenance of Imogen, lurked a triumph, the suppliant glance of love could not wholly subdue.

"Imogen," he said, taking her hand, "even thy reproach is dear to me, since it betrays that a lingering interest, whose existence I scarcely dared to hope, had survived the intervention of time and absence. Nor is it the less gracious for being undeserved: for no pang of conscience awakens to its tenderly accusing sound; my conduct has been the result of necessity, not of volition; my actions have been foreign to my heart, but my heart has ever been true to thee.—But to resume—

"I will confess to thee, sweet lady, that in pursuing the golden vision of my fond imagination, I scarcely had an object or aim in view. To see, to hear thee, to catch the timid glance of thine eye, to receive the smile of thy lip, to pursue the varying blush of thy cheek, and hang with rapturous delight upon the hope, the enjoyment, or the recollection of those moments, which love stole for me, and Imogen blest with her presence; such was the boundary of my wishes and my thoughts. Life, at that sweet æra, was all a blissful dream, with no other alloy to its imaginary delights, than the fear of being awakened excited: but the dream of my heart was at last doomed to destruction; and when the sweet illusion vanished, I found I was destined to love without the hope of ever possessing my love's fair object. My father's ancestral pride, his hatred of the Catholic faith, the ambitious views he had formed for his only son, were the objects which reason, prudence, and conviction, perpetually brought to my mind: while love, in laughing mischief, conjured up the form of the Novice of St. Domi-

nick, and those tormenting spirits sunk before the magic sound of the all-powerful exorcist. The hatred of the Friar, and, to confess the truth, the disgusting partiality of the lady Magdelaine, hourly urged my departure ; and yet it was a circumstance more powerful in its influence than either, that determined me to a step my heart and senses still rejected. On the morning of my last day's residence at the chateau, the father Anselm entered the apartment of lady Magdelaine, where I sat writing, and informed her in Italian, of which he supposed me ignorant, that the blast of the war-horn echoed almost to the portals of the chateau : for that the royal army had invested Epernai, a town not two leagues distant ; that a report was spread of the duke of Parma's death, who was the soul of the league ; and that the king himself had just come to the relief of the duke de Biron, to whom he had given the command of his troops. How the emotion of this news awakened in my heart escaped the penetration of the Friar, can only be accounted for by the agitation he was himself plunged in ; happily I was immediately dismissed. The king had torn himself from the allurements of pleasure, the embrace of love, to share the dangers of the lowest of his subjects ; and the suffrage which his weakness accorded to my own no longer existed. I must fly, said I ; the voice of glory, of duty, can be no longer neglected. I must break the Circe-like spell which holds me in delighted bondage ; and, to secure the future happiness of Imogen, must now sacrifice my own. Yes, while I resigned the destiny of my love to a future day and happier prospects, I determined that, as soon as my professional duties would permit, I would effect your escape from the chateau de Montmorell, and place you beyond the reach of that living death monastic bigotry was preparing for you, by consigning you to the care of a female friend, on whose kindness I knew I had an unlimited letter of credit, which gratitude for a trifling service endowed me with. A circumstance which took place in the morning confirmed my intention ; a circumstance which arose from the Friar's having possessed himself of a poetical effusion

addressed to the *minstrel*." The baron paused, and withdrew his eyes from the blushing face of Imogen.

"The perusal of that poem awakened, without confirming, hopes, which love too eagerly embraced. In all the ardour of new-born transport, in all the lively admiration of a genius almost idolized, I flew to seek the enchanting poetess.—Imogen, when will my heart be weary of recurring to that sweet moment, when my lips first violated the sacred silence love even to adoration had till then imposed; that moment, when one glance from Imogen diffused all the poison of a sweet but dangerous hope into my heart? Nay, avert not those eyes, that then beamed not thus coldly on me; and forgive this (to thee) idle repetition: for when the heart is in its dotage, it loves to pause and loiter over the tender recollection of its faded joys; nor spares the patience of its auditor in the recapitulation of its treasured blisses. In the most enrapturing, the richest, sweetest moment of my existence, thou mayest remember I was torn from thy presence by the jealous fears of the lady Magdelaine. The envy and vain suspicion of the Friar made me a prisoner, ere I could unfold to thee the purposes of my heart, with respect to thy future fate, or reveal my real rank and character. And yet let me say to thee, sweet lady! that in all the pride of self-love, perhaps too fastidiously organised, my soul rejoiced in the certainty, that whatever interest I had excited in the inestimable heart of genius, virtue, and sensibility, I owed that precious interest to myself alone, wholly independent of the extraneous and dazzling advantages of rank and fortune. That certainly conveyed a more lively throb of rapture to my heart, than all that opulence and dignity ever conferred upon the ambitious mind of all-ambitious man. My feelings, my affection, my pride, my reason, revelled even to delirium in the transporting conviction; and I almost blessed, while I regretted, the interruption which prevented a discovery that might eventually have destroyed my boundless confidence.

"Overcome by numbers, after many vain struggles, I found myself in a remote apartment at the west end of the chateau, and heard the door of my prison strong-

ly barred and bolted on the outside. As the servile crowd who had dragged me thither retired, and when I was in some degree recovered from the exhausted state my useless and violent exertions had thrown me into, I carefully examined the place of my confinement.

"It was a small and ruinous apartment, with one grated window, which hung over the Aisne. The prospect it commanded was extensive; the cloudless light of that beautiful planet, which had a few minutes before attracted our admiring gaze, shone with splendour on the distant spires of Epernai; and the watch-fires of the royal camp were discernible at certain distances. What a prospect to a man, in whose heart the flame of glory was just illumined with renovated ardour, who, within sight of his royal commander and brave fellow-soldiers, found himself a prisoner to those who would probably make a merit of delivering him, on bare suspicion, to the enemy of his country and his king, to gratify their own private pique; and thus expose him to danger greater, if possible, than that he had already escaped! My blood boiled in my veins; my heart beat with an emotion very different from that which a short time before had awakened its palpitation: it was not the soft wild thrilling pulse of love, but the feverish rapid throb of rage, disappointment, shame, and indignation. With an effort of Herculean strength, borrowed from the energizing passions of the existing moment, I wrenched one of the bars from its decayed foundation; and a great part of the frame-work giving way, I found little difficulty in making a breach sufficiently wide to escape by. A height of twenty feet scarcely presented an obstacle to a spirit wound up to desperation; and without the hesitation of a moment, I plunged into the waves beneath, which seemed to swell their moon-light bosoms to receive me; but stunned by my headlong fall, I was borne unresisting for a considerable way down the stream; then recovering strength and presence of mind, I swam to the opposite shore, which brought me within a league of the camp, which at day-break I reached, at the moment that the king at the head of his troops was engaged with a numerous squadron the enemy were attempting to throw

ST. DOMINICK.

into the town; the defeat of which by the royalists prevented the siege being raised. I arrived in the heat of desperate action, and, seizing the arms of a wounded soldier, in the confusion of the engagement got so near the king, as to receive in my breast a ball aimed at his; for the scarlet cloak and snowy plumage always rendered him an obvious mark. Bathed in blood, which stained the wet drapery of my drenched habit, I fell lifeless at my sovereign's feet. The king himself, though believing me to be but a private soldier, raised me in his arms; and was consigning me, with the flattering epithet of his saviour, to an officer who stood near him; when raising my fast closing eyes I perceived that officer was my father! I sunk in his embrace without life or motion.

"Awakened from my trance by the anguish the dressing of my wounds occasioned, I found myself in the royal tent, lying on a couch, surrounded by surgeons, and supported by my father's arms. I could scarcely return his warm and tender embrace, while tears that flowed from his affectionate and paternal heart fell on my face, and revived my sinking spirits. When I had swallowed some cordials, and my wounds were bound up, I attempted to speak, but the surgeons imposed silence. I found I was too weak to allow them to extract the ball, without endangering my life, which lay almost within a hair's breadth of a vital part. I read the mortality of my wound in the countenance of all who surrounded me; in the enanguished, the heart-breaking looks of my father, I alone traced some gleam of hope; for when death hovers over the couch of the child, the parent's heart is the last to deny her consolatory illusions.

"The ball was at last extracted, and for three days my life was despaired of. On the evening of the fourth, the gangrene irritation of the wound subsided, though it was still painful, even to madness; and for the first time the surgeons pronounced me out of imminent danger; but it was not till the expiration of the two succeeding days, I was suffered to satisfy the tender solicitude, the anxious curiosity of my father. I related to him in a few words my adventures; and when I wished to be most concise was most tedious: over my admission at the chateau I

loitered with imprudent fondness, and confessed unconsciously what I had determined to conceal, that I had remained there more than a week. My father, fixing a look of penetration on my face, asked me my inducement to remain beneath the roof of one, whose family had long been at professed variance with our own, who was bigotted in her attachment to the League, and her hatred to the royalists, and whose private character and person were as disgusting, as her public principles were odious; at a period too, when my own security, duty, and the anxiety of a father called loudly on me not to waste a moment in delay? To these natural inquiries I returned an hesitating, vague, and equivocal answer; and yet my father appeared satisfied. He then informed me, that the king was deeply impressed with a sense of what he was pleased to term my gallant conduct, though he somewhat blamed the imprudence which had led me into the heart of the enemy's camp, that he had conferred on me the title of baron de Montargis, and given my father letters patent for the dukedom of Beauvilliers.

“ ‘To crown all,’ said my father, ‘he has laid out for you the most honourable alliance in France, by uniting you to the richest Protestant heiress in it, the daughter of the duke de V——. The death of the duke de Parma, and the time taken up by the League in appointing a successor, gives his majesty time to breathe; and he has fixed on Mantes as his residence, as a place well calculated by its situation to frustrate the machinations of his enemies. Thither we will attend him, and he has done you the honour to appoint you to a situation immediately about his person.’

“ While I lay overwhelmed and motionless by this information, which seemed as grateful to my father's heart as it was wounding to mine, the king himself entered, attended only by the baron de Rosni, with all that fascinating condescension which so eminently distinguishes the most illustrious of monarchs, the most amiable of men. He embraced me with the affectionate warmth of a father, inquired with tender solicitude into the state of my health, flatteringly declared he owed his life to what he was pleased to term my gallant interfer-

ence, and then repeated all my father had already said. 'You know my character,' added the king, 'sanguine even in trifles; but when the interest of my friends is concerned, impatient as a froward child. I am more shocked by the delay your illness occasions than you can be yourself: yet I am not altogether so disinterested in your recovery as you may suppose; for in promoting your interest I shall not wholly neglect my own.'

"I with difficulty, but with energy, assured the king I would willingly devote my life to his service; and that could I believe I should be instrumental in promoting his happiness or interest, I should consider it as too cheaply purchased with my own. '*Ventre Saint Gris!*' said his majesty, smiling at the enthusiasm of my manner, heightened by the raging fire of a fever that was kindling in my veins. '*Ventre Saint Gris!* I do believe it. Kings must share the lot of human nature, and learn to suffer, were it only to know its choicest blessing—to be beloved. Adversity alone is the touchstone of friendship. He who is always prosperous sees the world but on one side. It was in the sharpest vicissitudes of fortune, when I was a king without a kingdom, a general without an army, a husband without a wife; when I was persecuted, pursued, oppressed, by a power I vainly opposed, that I found in the mine of friendship what was almost an equivalent for all Catherine de Medicis would have deprived me of.' The king laid his hand on the shoulder of the baron de Rosni, and looking in his face with an affectionate smile, added: 'I shall never quarrel with adversity, since it has given me so faithful a friend as de Rosni.' A hectic of pleasure, of pride, passed across the baron de Rosni's face; he bowed low and said: 'Sire, it is a principle with your majesty to over-rate the services of others in proportion as you undervalue those illustrious virtues which, more than your rank, exact them.'

"The king then adverted to those measures requisite to be taken for the security of his crown. Many of the nobility still opposed his endeavours; and among those of whose fealty he was dubious was the duke de V——. 'I have proposed to him,' said the king, 'a union between his daughter and the son of one of the most sted-

fast of my adherents. When mademoiselle de V—— is the wife of the baron de Montargis, I shall no longer fear for the fealty of her father. But,' he kindly added, observing the paleness that suddenly overspread my face, 'I fear we have exhausted and wearied our invalid.' I attempted to speak, but his majesty, gaily putting his hand on my lips, said: 'Nay, reserve your eloquence for mademoiselle de V——; meantime I shall officiate as love's herald, and hold a parley for you, until you are able to address your liege lady *in propria persona*. She attends our little court at Mantes, whither I go to-morrow.' The king then bade me farewell, and retired, followed by de Rosni and my father. The attendants had been previously dismissed when his majesty's intention of visiting me had been announced, and I happily found myself alone at a moment when I was so little able to support the presence of any human being. When the first confused ideas of my agonized mind subsided, I briefly enumerated those arguments which reason brought forward in favour of an union my heart, even though it had been free, would have rejected. It was an object to which my father's wish for my aggrandizement had long pointed, and which now attained, it would be impossible to force him to relinquish. It was not only the *will* of my sovereign, but his *interest*; and to be ranked among the number of those noble friends who had served him, and shared his friendship, his esteem, his gratitude; to be added to that honourable and illustrious list of loyal patriots who so willingly sacrificed every private consideration to restore peace to their country, to their king his just rights; to find my name enrolled with those of the brave Crillon, the generous La Noue, the heroic Biron, the prudent, wise, and faithful de Rosni! Yes, said I, starting from my couch, I will instantly follow the king, acknowledge his goodness, accompany him to Mantes, and throw myself at the feet of mademoiselle de V——. At that moment a paper that lay on the ground caught my eye. I looked on it for a moment: it contained a drawing of Imogen in the habit of a Novice of St. Dominick, and had been done by Theodore, the page of Montmorell, from whom I had purchased it with my harp.

" This precious shadow had ne'er left a bosom where the original reigned omnipotent. From the moment it was mine I had enclosed it, with a few beads dropped from the novice's rosary, and the little poem addressed to the minstrel, in the minstrel gorget, which, like a precious reliquary, I had fastened round my neck, and by which they had escaped the waters of the Aisne. Oh, the talismanic power of this little picture! I snatched it up, and covered it with kisses. My father, my king, my bride, were all forgotten: Imogen reigned alone sovereign of my thoughts! At that instant I heard some one approach, and attempted to hide my treasure in its little depositary, when to my amazement I found it was gone: it had been taken from my bosom.

" While I was searching my couch my father entered. Without speaking, he eagerly looked round the room, and seemed as eagerly employed in searching for something lost as myself; when observing the picture in my hand, he started. Imogen, spare me the repetition of what followed. Suffice it to say, that my father had possessed himself of the gorget, and soon became master of the secret of my heart. On the evening of that day I was seized with a raging delirious fever: it had long brooded in my veins: the wet clothes I had worn for so long a time after my passage across the Aisne, the violent heat which had succeeded, together with the irritation of my wound, and the perturbation of my mind and passions, reduced me to that state which not only threatened my life, but, what is so much more dreadful even to think of, my reason. When the effects of my disorder on my corporeal frame were in some degree subsided, my distracted father brought me in a litter to Paris, where, under the care of two eminent physicians, I slowly recovered my senses and my health. The first moment of returning reason was that in which I awakened from a deep sleep. I drew back the curtain of my bed, and to my amazement beheld a lady richly habited seated by my side. She was talking in a low voice to my father, when turning round her head, her eye met mine. I uttered an exclamation of surprise, and sunk on my pillow. This lady was not a stranger to me."

The baron started as if this confession had escaped him, and coloured deeply. Imogen's penetrating eye was fixed on his countenance. That blush was a kindred effusion of one which had stained the baron's cheek when he had mentioned the mystery of his emancipation from the prison of N——; and, by the association of ideas this recollection awakened, Imogen believed this was the person to whom he owed his deliverance.

The baron continued: "My father, observing the intelligence of my looks, embraced me tenderly, and with tears exclaimed: 'My son! my beloved son! you are again restored to me! Come, madam,' said he, taking the lady by the hand, 'share in the happiness which it is reserved for you to confirm.' Imogen, this lady was ——"

"Your deliverer from the prison of N——."

The baron hesitated. "You have indeed guessed right," said he, after a pause, and in some confusion; "and still more, this generous deliverer was—mademoiselle de V——!"

A death-like paleness overspread the countenance of Imogen. She turned aside her head to conceal her emotion. The baron hung down his, and a long silence ensued. Then in a hurried accent he added: "But not to intrude longer on your patience, mademoiselle de V—— was an only child, whose will had become sovereign from the fatal fondness of her parents, and whose naturally strong passions had been nurtured by boundless indulgence. She had been brought up in solitude at her father's chateau in Provence. The female attendant most in her confidence had been a servant of my mother's, and my nurse. She had filled the mind of her youthful and credulous mistress with such reports of the perfections of the being she had fostered at her bosom, that the young romantic imagination of mademoiselle de V—— became enamoured of a phantom of ideal excellence. She had seen me at Paris on my return from England; but our parents, then at variance, prevented an intimacy taking place. We met at court and in public. She was then, though not beautiful, that is, not *femininely* lovely, not all we wish in woman, the object of fashiona-

ble admiration. I looked at her with curiosity, and she probably construed my observation into a warmer sentiment. I left Paris, and did not again behold her until she effected my deliverance at N——. She was then on a visit there with her maternal uncle, the governor of the town. Her humanity became interested for me; her spirit was adventurous, her mind romantic, and her Provencal servant, my old attendant, perpetually wept my fate in her presence. The governor resided in the citadel, whose walls also enclosed the prison where state criminals were confined. The tower in which I was lodged hung over a terrace, where, induced by the view it commanded, madame de V——, attended by her confidant, used sometimes to walk. It was in the stillness of a fine moonlight evening that the tones of my harp first caught her ear, and from that moment she determined on my delivery, which she afterwards so generously effected."

Here the baron again paused. Imogen's emotion continued to increase beyond every effort to subdue or conceal it; while the baron, abruptly starting from a profound reverie, took up the thread of his story in an unconnected manner and in a rapid tone.

"I recovered, and was just able to go out when the king arrived at Paris. The discovery of many factions in the very heart of his army, factions which even aimed at his life; the offer of the crown of France by the duke de Mayenne to the king of Spain; together with the horror of perpetuating a civil and religious war in the heart of his country, induced the king to embrace the Catholic religion; and even my father and the baron de Rosni, the staunchest Hugonots in the kingdom, urged him to it most strenuously, with all the most respectable of the nobility of France. My father and myself attended his majesty to the church of St. Denis, where, surrounded by a multitude, who crowded with idolatrous fondness to behold a monarch who united in his person the three races of their kings, he made his abjuration in form.

"Multitudes of voices cried, 'Long live the king;' and every joyous countenance ratified the sincerity of the

prayer.* The Parisians, who had hitherto sided with the League, weary of the horrors of rebellion, and convinced that that faction, far from having the good of their country at heart, were active only to promote their own private interests, called loudly for peace, and obliged the duke de Mayenne to supplicate the king to grant a truce for three months, which he willingly did; and shortly after, the royal hero was received at Paris with such acclamations of rapture, that he exclaimed with enthusiastic transport, 'They are wild to see a king!' A general pardon was granted to all who had taken up arms; and the greatest order, subordination, and propriety was preserved among the army, of the triumphant royalists, while the king obtained a more boundless empire over the hearts of his subjects than royalty alone could confer. The vivacity of his temper, the brilliancy of his repartees, the condescension of his manners, rendered him the idol of a people to whom such accomplishments bear a magnetic attraction. All the principal provinces betrayed an impatience to submit themselves to their amiable conqueror; the Spaniards seeing, that in the centre of the kingdom, all was lost to them, resolved to impede the torrent by some unexpected stroke, and laid siege to Aix-la-Chapelle. The king did not hesitate a moment to quit his domestic concerns, and instantly left Paris with his troops, and some of his principal nobility, to prevent the reduction of the town. I attended him at the head of my regiment, as did my father, but unfortunately, before we arrived, the garrison had surrendered to the count de Mansfield, the Spanish general.

"Without giving breathing time to his troops, the king, by way of reprisal, instantly invested Laon; which by the defeat of the convoy sent to succour it must soon submit to his majesty, although the garrison still holds out with an obstinate intrepidity that deserves success, though it is impossible it can command it.

* "A pleasant adventure happened me at church; an old woman of eighty caught me by the arm and kissed me. I was not the first to laugh at the circumstance. To-morrow you shall sweeten my lip." Vide *Recueil des Lettres de Henri le Grand à Mad. d'Estrees*.

"The extreme agitation of public affairs, and the anxiety with which every one has entered into the interest of the king, has for the present suspended all private considerations in the hearts of his adherents. My father, on the commencement of the siege, was obliged to leave the camp for the province he governed; and the king's favour conferred on his son that high military command which he had been obliged to relinquish. To this undeserved honour was added the flattering distinction of being appointed one of the hundred, who accompanied the duke de Biron in his late hazardous and successful enterprize. Oh! in this instance, shall I not become a fatalist in sentiment, and believe it was a happy destiny that governed an event which threw into my possession such a *prize*, as required more heroism in Scipio to resign than to effect the victory which made it his. When, in the horrid tumult of the battle, my eyes, dazzled by the flying or contending multitude, shocked by the prospect of protracted carnage and human butchery, recoiling from the horrors which blasted their glance, turned towards that spot where an intrepid youthful champion, with more than mortal courage, defended a prostrate friend; Oh! how little did I think that that champion was the daughter of the count de St. Dorval; that that heroic daughter was the timid gentle Imogen! yet even then my heart's fond instinct led me towards the spot your presence sanctified; but the fury of pursuit tore me from thee, and I could only charge two of my soldiers in thy favour. The hurry, the confusion, which ever succeeds a fierce engagement, prevented me inquiring for a prisoner who had excited no common interest, and whom I looked on as my own; for, dreadful to think! it was my interference that saved the most invaluable of lives, and changed a cruel death into, I trust, a mild captivity.

"And now," added the baron with a faint smile, "I will at least grant a truce to the patience and flattering attention with which you have honoured a soldier's plain unvarnished tale, that lost its interest to the reciter when you ceased to be its theme." The baron paused, while the name of mademoiselle de V—— hovered on the lip

of Imogen, her eye seemed to demand why he had turned the most interesting crisis of his detail into the stream of public affairs, and left his situation with respect to mademoiselle de V—— unascertained, to speak of the political state of France. The baron read the interrogation in the expressive glance which was raised to his face, and added in a tone of hesitation, "but though, my fair auditress, I have granted a truce to your patience, I cannot wholly relinquish my claims to it, and if I dared to believe, to hope, that at a future period"——"My lord," repeated Imogen in a tone of mortification, and rising from her seat, then in a firmer voice added, "I at least can have no further claims on your candour. Moments like these, to a mind wearied by anxiety, are precious. Will you not suffer me to hope you will use them in my favour, by effecting my immediate restoration to my suffering father?"

The baron's colour changed as she spoke; he paced the tent with rapid steps, while the emotions of his countenance betrayed those internal struggles which agitated a mind divided between contending passions. As Imogen's timid eye pursued the motion of the youthful warrior's graceful form, or marked the pensive gloom that hung upon his manly brow, and dimmed the lustre of his shining eyes, a profound sigh escaped her lips; in which her father's fate could claim no share. She again seated herself, and supported her drooping head on the hand that concealed her face. That tender sigh acted like a spell on the feelings of the baron; he advanced, and respectfully taking her hand, fixed his eyes, full of melancholy but reproachful expression, on her half-averted face, and exclaimed: "An immediate restoration! and are you then, oh Imogen! so impatient to leave one who ——"

"My lord," interrupted Imogen, disengaging her hand, and in evident perturbation, "impatience is *too cold* a word."

"Well, madam," said the baron, with an air of mortification, mingled with an hauteur that perhaps formed the predominant expression of his countenance and manner, "we will not dispute about the *word*, when the *sentiment*

is so obvious. Reluctant as the count de St. Dorval may be to owe the recovery of his daughter to a *Montargis*, every nerve shall be strained to effect that eagerly wished-for immediate restoration. "I go, lady," continued he as he put on his helmet and girded on his sword, "to the tent of his majesty, to inform him of the rich spoil the fortune of war has graced his arms withal, and to learn the fate of his lovely captive." The baron retired, and Imogen almost articulately exclaimed, "Alas! and am I so willingly obeyed?"

Alone and unobserved, the long repressed emotions which had struggled in the bosom of the prisoner, rushed over her heart with the overwhelming influence of a torrent at the moment when it first bursts the barrier that should impede its headlong force. She wept; but each tear of regret could claim a kindred smile of joy: she sighed; but each sigh of apprehension was but prelusive of a thrill of hope. Now his inviolable engagements to the duke de V—— floated on her pensive memory; and now delighted recollection dwelt on those impassioned declarations, those ardent looks, those warm professions and tender sighs, which so eloquently declared that in this alliance of policy and parental ambition the heart had no share, and that the captive daughter of the count de St. Dorval still maintained the empire won by the Novice of St. Dominick; "and yet," thought Imogen, "what obscurity, what mystery, hovered over the conclusion of his narrative; and though he touched with so much modest carelessness over the partiality of *mademoiselle de V——*, how obviously did those slight but marking traits of her character and conduct evince the tenderness, the fidelity, the heroism of her romantic passion? 'Enamoured of a phantom of ideal excellence.' Oh no! her love was founded in nature, in sentiment, in reason; it was the homage of the heart to virtue, in virtue's noblest form; it was a lively, a profound consciousness of the inestimable worth of goodness united to genius, taste, and knowledge; it was a love so sanctioned, that to have felt it was almost to partake of the excellence which gave it birth." It was thus the heart of Imogen borrowed a suffrage for its own weakness, by excusing

that of another, and attributing to mademoiselle de V—— all she herself had experienced.

Then reverting again to her rival, she continued :—
 “And it was reserved for thee, oh happy and amiable woman ! to protect and save the idol of your affections ; the saviour of his forfeit life, his liberator from captivity, his tender attendant in sickness : but it rests in the generous and grateful heart of Montargis to reward thee for these acts of love.” The sense of her own empire over that heart faded into despondency at this conviction, the sophistry of her fears had adduced ; and she beheld the baron de Montargis, the happy husband of the enviable de V—— ; “while I,” she continued, “still wandering hopelessly on in love’s dreary pilgrimage, faithful though afflicted, constant though deceived, shall waste the spirit of youth in chill despondency, then die without the hope of surviving my existence in the memory of him, for whom alone I lived.” It is the peculiar property of delicate and refined minds, united to lively and ardent imaginations, to enjoy more bliss from fancied happiness than human reality can confer ; and to suffer more from ideal woes than human calamities can impose. The sufferings of Imogen were of the heart and imagination, and they were insupportable. Abandoning herself to the influence of her emotion, she folded her arms on the table, and reposing her head on them wept the fate her own fancy had conjured up. At that moment the baron entered ; he started as he observed her attitude and agitation. The pride of Imogen recoiled from the discovery of her weakness, and she strove to disguise it beneath an affected indifference and haughtiness of manner. She dried her eyes, and arose with an air of graceful dignity. The baron taking her hand, looked with tender anxiety on her face, and with a faint and affectionate voice exclaimed : “In tears, Imogen !” “A tear, I believe, my lord,” said Imogen, with a forced smile, “is no unusual guest in the eye of a captive.*” “And do *you* feel yourself a captive, lady ?” reproachfully demanded the baron.

* The art of dissembling appears always to form a strong trait in the character of the heroine, of a female author.—*Editor*.

"I am not insensible to your goodness," said Imogen, with assumed firmness, "but I *feel* I am a *child* divided from a suffering father, who at this moment may require all a child's solicitude and care." At her father's name the full heart of Imogen again sent tears to her eyes.

"Imogen," said the baron, relinquishing her hand, and in great perturbation, "do not make me *hate thy virtues*, do not force me to believe that a new-formed affection for a being whose very existence but a few days back was unknown to thee, supersedes every other sentiment, every other feeling in your bosom. Let a friendship once so candidly avowed, so solemnly pledged, a compassion once so freely granted, still maintain *some* influence in that all filial heart. Once, oh Imogen, you agreed with me that collateral ties were not all sufficient to fill up the heart's aching void."

To this Imogen made no reply; her harassed spirits were unable to resist the force of her feelings, and she *only*, and in a faint voice, demanded if his embassy to the king had been crowned with success? The baron threw himself into a chair beside her, and replied: "As I suspected, my application for this evening was too late. The king has been labouring all day in the trenches like a common soldier, in order to encourage and animate his men, who look up to him equally for example and reward. The baron de Rosni has at last prevailed on him to retire to rest; and after two nights spent in watching and anxiety, he has fallen into a profound sleep, and for this night it would be impossible to obtain an audience. I regret the circumstance on your account, although it could avail little more than soothing your impatience; for the evening is far advanced, and until to-morrow nothing could be done." Imogen bowed her head, and answered only with a sigh of very equivocal birth. She was not glad to be detained from her father, but she was not sorry to enjoy a little longer the society of one, from whom perhaps she was about for ever to be severed.

The baron, gazing on the heaviness of her fine eyes and the paleness of her cheeks, said, with tender solicitude, as he arose, "Let thy heart for this night rest in peace; for thy harassed nature demands repose; the

heaviness of fatigue beyond thy strength to bear, hangs upon thy brow, and fades the roses on thy cheek. Within the limits of this tent, unmeet indeed for such a guest, safety shall shield thee, and preserve this spot sacred to thee from the violation of every intruder. My station lies within view of this *honoured* tent, and I shall guard my illustrious prisoner with no small circumspection."

Then bowing on her hand, and gracefully paying the salutation of the night, he retired. He had scarcely left her, when the two females who had attended her in the morning, presented themselves; and having brought in tapers, and arranged a couch in the inward division of the tent, they offered their services to Imogen to assist her in undressing, which she thankfully declined, and was again left to herself. The first wild tumult of her thoughts had subsided into a train of more calm consideration, and the extreme fatigue of mind and spirits which she had undergone, soon lulled the irritation of her feelings, and overpowered the influence of her emotions. The first night watch had not relinquished his station at the entrance of the tent, when the sufferings of the past, the anxieties of the future, and the reflections of the present, were buried in the soft oblivion of profound repose.

CHAP. XVII.

L'art devin, de peindre, l'esprit, a l'esprit.

J. J. ROUSSEAU.

The high communion of superior minds.

AKENSIDE.

THE sun rode high in the horizon before Imogen left a couch over which the spirit of repose seemed to shed its choicest gifts; calm and undisturbed had been her sleep, and fancy's fairy spell conjured up the fairest visions of joy to the dream of her rest; the cares, the anxieties, the turbulent emotions of the preceding day were lulled into forgetfulness in the grateful sensation

of renovated strength and recruited spirits, health blushed on her cheek and sparkled in her eye, and the tone of her mind and feelings was well calculated to banish dejection, convert languor into vivacity, and open the soul to the visitation of hope, of joy, of love.

Fresh from the duties of her simple toilet, she entered the outer apartment, where an elegant breakfast was spread that seemed to come "with a wish, and with a wish retired." The drapery of the tent drawn aside to admit the fragrance of the morning air, discovered to the eye the splendid spectacle of the whole army drawn out on an extensive plain, while a number of fine military bands filled the air with strains of martial music; the unclouded sun poured a flood of radiance o'er the animated scene, and the arms of the soldiers brilliantly reflected back the beams which played on their points.

High above the innumerable military commanders which strewed the plain, attired in all the "dread magnificence" of war, the ponderous casque, shining faulchion, invulnerable breast-plate, and pliant cuirasses, the graceful form of the colonel of the king's life-guards, the baron de Montargis, towered in lofty eminence, and the round full tones of his deep and mellow voice distinctly vibrated amidst the wild variety of sound that assailed the ear of his prisoner; while her fond and searching glance soon discovered him amidst the gaudy multitude, the hero of an army of heroes: even "the lion port" of majesty, though surrounded by all the insignia of royal rank, passed on unheeded. Her eye, the obedient organ of her soul, took in no object save that which governed its every feeling; and her ear, the faithful passage to her heart, received no sound but that which alone and ever awakened its liveliest thrill of bliss. Never, indeed, was a form more calculated to fascinate the imagination of genius, and lend to poetry and painting the finest model of youthful heroism personified, than that of the baron de Montargis in his military habit, which, splendid, graceful, and characteristic, was admirably adapted to the majesty of mien, the dignity of air, and that animated expression of countenance and Roman outline of features, which eminently distinguished his person, and

gave him to the enamoured eye, the fervid and glowing fancy of Imogen, as a being of a higher sphere,

“On whom each god had set his seal,

“To give the world assurance of a man.”

When the troops dispersed, and she beheld the baron struggling through the crowd to approach her tent, his plummy crest waving in the breeze above the inferior multitude that surrounded him, her heart beat with a velocity that would have mocked the calculation of medical skill to ascertain; pleasure swam in her eye, blushed on her cheek, and shed its bright illumination over every feature of her animated face, to which the rapturous irritation of her feelings gave a marked and sweet expression.

With a rosy confusion of manner, and a smile playful though artless, she advanced to meet her amiable conqueror. He pressed the hand held out to him to his lips, and gazed in silent delight on the insinuating *naïveté* of her air and the freshness of her beauty's renovated bloom.

“Certainly,” said he, as he seated himself by her, “you have been on such an embassy as Psyche was invested with by Venus when she received from Proserpine a casket of blushes, blooms, and graces, enchanting looks and sovereign smiles; but that you have betrayed your trust, and reserved for yourself those treasures intended for the deity whom you resemble.”

“What, my lord,” said Imogen, gaily, and contemplating his warlike appearance, “a soldier and a courtier! gallant in the chamber as in the field, with a device on your shield like that of Alcibiades, a Cupid playing with thunderbolts.”

“But with this difference,” said the baron emphatically, “that the treacherous urchin has turned his arms against myself, instead of pointing them at my foes; and yet he knows the moderation of my desires, and that the rich plunder of one inestimable heart is all the spoil my utmost ambition pants to possess.”

The baron fixed a smiling but impassioned glance on Imogen's face, who, in blushing confusion, and sensible of the delicacy of her situation, which the weakness of

her heart rendered doubly obvious, endeavoured to give an indifferent turn to the conversation, and spoke of the pleasure she had received from the late splendid spectacle she had witnessed.

"Yes," said the baron, "the profession of a soldier wears a very attractive aspect to those who only behold it in its holiday garb, in all its splendid panoply, divested of its vicissitudes, its horrors, and its sufferings. I remember, when a boy, being present, for the first time, at a review held by Henry the Third at Fontainebleau. My senses, my imagination, were captivated, dazzled; military enthusiasm instantly plumed her rapid wing, and wandered through such scenes of bright illusion, performed such feats of supernatural courage and god-like heroism as romance loves to design and fancy to colour with her brightest tints. I burnt my Demosthenes for being less eminent in the field than the rostrum, and abandoned Horace as a coward, to be destroyed by moths and must; while the Achilles of Homer and the Eneas of Virgil, with a few *preux chevaliers* of modern date, became my study and my models. But alas! a few years military experience faded the glowing tints my imagination had shed over the picture. I saw that the laurels which fame flung over the path of victory did but conceal his footsteps' bloody track, and that the heart of humanity, of reason, groaned in anguish over those deeds which gave immortality to the name of the hero. I saw the ambition of a few, the scourge of millions; and I beheld the warrior in his splendid career overturning the rights, the liberties, and happiness of mankind, and obtaining a deathless name for having desolated and laid waste the fairest treasures in the moral and natural world."

"But I am sure," said Imogen, delighted with such sentiments from the lips of one who was yet in the heyday of valorous enthusiasm; "I am sure that even on the list of conquest, there are many names to be found who tempered magnanimity with moderation, and courage with humanity."

"I hope and believe there are," said the baron; "but partial instances are not an overbalance for the effects of a general and radical evil."

"It is not every one," said Imogen with a smile, "who has the courage to reveal and acknowledge the faults of his mistress."

"War is not my mistress," said the baron, "but my affianced bride, from whom I cannot in honour retreat, though inclination be as sharp as it will."

The strong allusion which this carelessly-uttered figure bore to the real state of the baron's more intimate engagements struck with the force of electricity not only on his own apprehension but on that of Imogen. Both changed colour under the influence of kindred emotion, and both were for a moment confused and silent. The baron, recovering his presence of mind, at last gaily exclaimed: "But a truce with war and all its horrors, at a moment when nothing but peace and joy should be the subjects of disquisition: it is time for me to ask my lovely guest if the soldier's rough couch and the noisy bustle of a camp allowed her that repose her weariness demanded?"

"Yes, my lord," said Imogen, gladly catching his gaiety, "such profound repose as might rival Epimenides's sleep of half a century."

"Then perhaps," said he, "you also possess the skill of Epimenides in explaining dreams; and were I to discover those which hovered in my fancy while I snatched a transient sleep on my post last night—but perhaps 'twere as well to conceal them. The dreams of the heart are often fatal to its peace."

Imogen involuntarily echoed back the half-checked sigh that issued from the baron's lips; then eagerly asked if he had obtained an audience of the king?

"No," he replied; "I have only beheld his majesty in the field, where he has been reviewing his forces since the morning dawn: but," said he rising, "if you desire it I will instantly endeavour to see him."

"I entreat it," said Imogen earnestly; and the baron, though with an air of reluctance, withdrew to obey her commands.

As he left the tent, part of the curtain that skreened its entrance remained undrawn, and admitted the dazzling beams of the sun, which played on the polished sur-

face of a small cabinet that filled a corner of the tent. She approached to admire its curious workmanship, when accidentally laying her hand on one of the pannels it flew open, and she found it was a little portable library filled with books, all in duodecimo size. This was a pleasing surprise: it was like meeting a circle of friends in a strange land. She had looked with eager curiosity and delight into above twenty volumes before the baron returned; yet so short was his absence, that she started to find him at her side before she thought he had reached the royal tent.

"I have again to regret," said he, "the ill-success of my embassy," while the triumphant smile that played on his lip might well bring the sincerity of that regret into question. "A cessation of arms agreed on between the besiegers and the besieged," continued he, "has given the king a holiday, and he has left the camp above an hour back, attended by some of his principal officers; and though the impatient anxiety may regret the event, the refined delicacy of your sentiments will approve its cause, when I inform you that this amiable monarch, more to be loved as a man than even revered as a hero, is gone to visit a small house in the forest of Folambray, where when a boy he had been regaled with fruit and new milk, and he now promises himself a sweet though melancholy satisfaction known only to superior minds, in visiting those scenes so familiar to him in the happy dawn of existence, and endeared to his heart by the fond recollection of many pleasant boyish incidents and youthful sports, ill exchanged for the busy cares and more important trifles of riper but less felicitous years."

"Oh!" said Imogen, "I can indeed forgive the cause, though the effects are so destructive to my present wishes. How natural to court even the returning shadow of those sweet and lively emotions which usher in every incident in the first sunny æra of life, when all is new and grateful to the unsated senses, and the unpractised feelings are tremblingly alive to every sweet impression. Restrained and limited as were the pleasures of my childhood, yet nature, rich in her own resources, shed many a guileless joy on my heart, which even now

throbs with the recollection of its infantine delights, and experiences in each departed day the death of sweet sensation, which can never, never return."

"But which," said the baron, "may be succeeded by a sweeter. Oh, Imogen! the pleasures of childhood are but negative; 'tis insensibility, not enjoyment; the fancy revels, but the heart lies still; the senses are amused, but the sentiment is yet dormant; and the profound source of bliss, where nature sums up all her joys in one, is still reserved for life's maturer æra, when the powers of the soul, the imagination, and the heart, are all awakened into rapturous existence."

The baron took Imogen's hand as he spoke, who, evading the dangerous theme he seemed anxious to prolong, said, as she disengaged her trembling hand: "There is something so cross in your thus missing the king, my lord, a second time, that I am tempted to believe there is some fatality hanging over my captivity; or haply," she added with a smile, "like other distressed damsels in the days of chivalry, I am under the spell of some powerful *enchanter*." At the word *enchanter* Imogen coloured, and a glance at the baron's countenance covered her with confusion.

"If," said he laughingly, "there is a spell in the question, 'tis I only who am under its influence. Would to heaven that spell was indeed of mutual force, and that the sorceress who exerted, became the sufferer of her own art. I believe, in spite of the Mosaic law and the capitularies of Charlemagne, I should *suffer the witch to live*, and even steal my own existence from hers."

Imogen was at this moment still standing near the book-cabinet, and now turned over the leaves of a volume she held in her hand with great eagerness, as if wholly intent on the occupation: "But I fear," said the baron, after a minute's silence, "that I intrude. When I assured you this tent should be an inviolable sanctuary, I did not mean to secure a saving clause in my own favour. Shall I leave you," said he, "in the midst of society which will at least afford you entertainment, though I fear not much instruction?"

"Suffer me then," said Imogen with an insinuating

smile, "to enjoy your society, from which I shall derive both."

The baron bowed with a look of proud and gratified feeling.

"I believe," continued Imogen, "I should apologize for this apparent breach of trust, but the door of the cabinet flew open to my touch; and to confess the truth, I was as much pleased to examine its contents as amazed to find such a treasure among the camp equipage of a military commander. How few, amidst the tumult of warfare, the dissipation of military life, would find leisure for intellectual improvement, or cherish a taste for literary pursuit!"

"And yet," said the baron, "my sweet flatterer, I am afraid that such an appendage in a tent wears rather an air of foppery, for even the gravest pursuit *has* its fopperies; but to confess the truth, early habits of study have so methodized into principle, that on the score of self-denial I should have more merit in relinquishing my books than retaining them as the constant companions of my public as well as my private life. I may say, with the elegant Pliny, that 'they feast my soul with a voluptuousness which is never followed by disgusts;' and though my leisure to enjoy them is limited, yet it is wonderful how many odd minutes and half-hours lie heavy on one's hands even in the more active professions, which a book delightfully and usefully occupies. Apropos of Pliny, whose charming letters I have so often seen in your hands at Montmorell in the original. Here is the first French translation of him we hear of; and what renders it doubly interesting, in spite of its obsolete style, is, that it was made by the beautiful duchess of Burgogne, niece to the cardinal de Bologne, in conjunction with our unfortunate king John, so long the prisoner of the illustrious Edward the Third of England."

"Interesting indeed!" said Imogen, eagerly taking the book from his hands; "and it reflects no little honour on our sex that the duchess was among the earliest revivers of letters at a period of literary darkness, when

the unhappy royal John, with all his passion for books, could not collect above twenty volumes in his library."

"But we must not let this charming duchess engross all the merit," said the baron, drawing out a small volume; "for here are some charming poems by her fair contemporary, Jane of Bourbon, wife of Charles the Fifth; who engaged Philip de Vitri, the beloved friend of Petrarch, to translate into French verse the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid. How could Petrarch at that very period give us the name of barbarians, when France boasted two such women as the duchess of Burgogne and Jane of Bourbon?"

"And what have you got on this shelf," said Imogen, "that looks so splendidly attired?"

"The ephemeral productions of modern holiday writers," said the baron, "almost beneath your attention, and merely calculated to amuse the mind, not to inform it."

"Nay," said Imogen smiling, "though I have lived so long with one of the *prejudiced literati* of Francis the First's day, I have not imbibed her pedantry so strongly as to look down with contempt on every work that does not smell of the must of antiquity. Some of the very few modern works the library of Montmorell afforded gave infinite pleasure in their perusal."

"Indeed!" said the baron; "then give me leave to recommend to you this little volume: it is *Astrea*, a charming romance by d'Urfe, a novel-writer of late date, to whom fancy and common-sense are much indebted: the one is chastened, corrected, and restrained by his judgment; the other restored to his place in the empire of imagination."

"I have read but few romances," said Imogen; "those few which the library of Montmorell supplied did not induce me to wish to extend my studies in that line. I remember being heartily weary of the wild tales of Diargue, the disciple of Ariosto, and not much interested in the wonderful histories of Leuceppe and Clitophon, or the romantic loves of Theagenes and Charicles."

"Which last," said the baron, "is in fact the progenitor of the whole fantastic species of romance. Strange to say, it was the work of an holy father, the sage Heliodorus, bishop of Irecas; and so enamoured was the pious divine of his literary bantling, that when condemned by a most gothic synod either to suppress his book or resign his episcopal honours, he (in the true spirit of authorship) preferred the latter, and sacrificed the mitre for the bays, the crosier for the pen."

"He is not, I believe," said Imogen, "the only sacred author romance can boast of in her service. I remember when first I came to Montmorell, Theodore, the young page (who was deeply read in romantic lore), lent me the Feats of Charlemagne the Great, by the archbishop Turpin; containing many wonderful exploits, and supernatural deeds, performed by the emperor before the walls of Narbonne. At first, my young and untutored imagination was captivated by this species of fiction: but as my judgment matured, not even the sanctity of the author was sufficient to awaken my interest to a recapitulation of extraordinary adventures, which shocked probability without amusing the mind; of extravagant actions, not even the licence of romance should tolerate; while the high-wrought virtues of their all-perfect heroines, and supernatural heroes, put my patience sadly to the test, and never failed to exhaust my attention. In fact, I believe nothing can be less sublime than my taste; for beyond the boldest flights of extravagant fancy, or eccentric genius, I prefer those works whose mild and natural fictions touch the heart, and call its sweetest feelings into being; those simple stories which unfold a series of events, such as life's vicissitudes may eventually display,—where the characters strongly drawn, but not over-wrought, are placed in interesting situations; and where the warm, the tender affections of the heart, form the ground-work of the piece."

"Yes," said the baron with a sigh, and fixing his delighted eyes on the face of Imogen, "my charming critic, you are right, it is on the heart alone we are all dependant for life's best blisses; reason may degenerate into sophistry, fancy into delusion, but the heart, the

heart is the infallible, the immutable guide to supreme felicity: and yet its vicissitudes are dreadful; but its joys, its full abundant joys—Oh! who would not endure its sufferings for an age, to enjoy its blisses but for an hour?"

"I must confess," said Imogen smiling, "*I am not one of those enthusiastic epicures in bliss.*"

"You! you! Imogen," exclaimed the baron, seizing both her hands, and gazing ardently on her: then suddenly letting them fall, he added, "Alas! thou knowest not what thou art, the profound emotion of which thou art capable! for *thy* heart, I fear, lies yet unconscious of its riches."

Imogen, more confused by the manner in which these words were uttered than their purport, turned to the cabinet, and taking down another volume, said: "What have we got here? Petrarch? how much I regret my ignorance of the Italian language, since it now prevents me satisfying a curiosity so long indulged. Pray, my lord, was not this far-famed writer, the most ardent, the most constant, the most unfortunate of lovers?"

"I believe," said the baron, smiling at the romantic simplicity of the question, and the *naïveté* with which it was demanded, "I believe, if you had given him the epithet of the most *poetical*, it would be at least as just as any you have honoured him with, for I have always thought that neither his amatory joys or sorrows were of the heart: indeed, if I recollect right, he somewhere acknowledges himself, 'that it was requisite he should be unhappy;' for had his love been propitious, we should have had no charming plaintive sonnets; and I believe he would rather have resigned his mistress than his muse, and served the lady de Sade as the bishop de Irecas did his episcopacy. It is to his unhappy passion he owes his immortality; this he foresaw: his love sonnets will carry down his name to ages yet unborn, while his polemical and other works survived not his own actual existence; and yet to me his passion for Laura, all-forcible as he delineates its effects, appears a mere paradox. How could he choose *her* as the mistress of his soul, who was incapable of becoming the companion of his

mind? Laura, like many ladies of the first rank in her day, was so profoundly ignorant as not either to read or write, and spent her life in a circle of un-ideal women at her loom, or her embroidery; and what influence can mere unintelligent beauty obtain over such a heart as a man of Petrarch's genius and learning must have possessed? Tell me, my sweet friend, is not a sympathy of taste, sentiment, and pursuit, the surest foundation for the tenderest, noblest, purest love?"

"I should think so," said Imogen, faintly colouring.

"And I felt it," said the baron emphatically; "the wonderful influence of mind over female charms, and the passions they are capable of awakening, is scarcely yet understood in this half gothic day; while man is even still struggling with the prejudices, the ignorance, of those barbarous ages which succeeded to the all-illuminated day of wisdom, knowledge, and science; woman, satisfied in the omnipotence of her beauty, neglects to assert those claims on intellectual graces, which can alone confirm her empire over the understanding, exalt her influence over the senses, and render the charms of her mind seducing as those of her person."

"But is there not something Utopian in this sketch of what female empire *might* become?" said Imogen with a smile: "is it not a theory more beautiful than practicable!"

"If you can indeed entertain such a doubt," said the baron, "I can only say that you are yourself the best proof of the fallacy of your own sceptic position; but less you should object to a solitary exception in general assertion, I can at least bring classic authority to validate my hypothesis."

"In Greece, where beauty was deified, and the countless altars of the all-subduing goddess smoked with the incessant offerings of the most ardent votarists, woman was still taught to appreciate the powers of mind (even those whose profession was but to charm the senses); loveliness and intelligence were almost inseparably connected, as she who conquered by her beauty confirmed her empire by her wit. Aspasia came to Athens to teach eloquence from the lip of love. Socrates and

Pericles became her pupils : the former imbibed the *philosophia amatoria* at the feet of his intelligent preceptress; and the latter, enamoured of her intellectual charms, made her his wife. Epicurus, who studied ease of mind too much to submit to the vicissitudes of passion, was lured into attachment for his pupil Leonsium, by the persuasive *Attic* elegance of her literary works and conversation ; and it was not the mere personal attractions of Pythias the wife of Aristotle, which induced him to wish she could be deified, and receive the same worship as was paid to the goddess Ceres."

"If," said Imogen, "I was so excellent a sophist as to controvert truths which are morally undeniable, I am yet too much a *woman* to wish to deny a single assertion which could extend, even in the least degree extend, the empire of my sex. But Petrarch! what would have become of the unfortunate Petrarch had the mind of Laura equalled her person?"—"He had not then lived to sing his woes," said the baron, "but had died in their endurance : and yet from the first æra of his passion he despaired of obtaining its object, for she was virtuous, and the faithful wife of another."—"And can love survive hope?" asked Imogen earnestly.—"I fear it can," sighed the baron.—"But not if pride and reason exert their powers," returned Imogen with animation.

"Ah! Imogen, is pride always victorious in the combat with affection, or the chill declamation of reason persuasive as the eloquence of the heart?"

"Not, my lord, if we are determined to listen to the heart only ; if we are enamoured of the disorder and reject a cure, as those who cherish weakness to excite pity ; or if we fancy our case desperate, when we are not even in danger."

"That is, my fair casuist, you think the *heart* is liable to hypocondriæ as the body."

"Exactly."

"Ah Imogen! it is for you only who are in rude health, to talk lightly of that disease which shakes the invalid to dissolution. In the words of a divine English poet :

"He jests at scars who never felt a wound."

The baron, fixing his eyes on Imogen's face, sighed and shook his head.

"But we are forgetting Petrarch, my lord. Though you quarrel with him as a lover, yet as a poet ——"

"As a poet, and an amatory one, Petrarch stands almost unrivalled; will you give me leave to introduce him to you as such, through the medium of a very indifferent translation?" He then presented Imogen a chair, and seating himself beside her, translated, in very poetical language, Petrarch's beautiful sonnet of "*Dubbi amorosi*:" yet he seemed rather to recite from memory than to read; to utter the spontaneous effusions of his own heart, than of another's imagination; for while his eloquent lips did ample justice to the tender self-inquiries of the doubtful lover, his more eloquent eyes, beaming full on his auditress, illustrated the sensations he described, and twice he repeated the impassioned exclamation:

"Oh! viva morte! O, dillitoso male,
Comè puo tante in me—Sio no'l consento!"

with a sensibility of voice, an energy of manner, that spoke the perfect consonance of the sentiment with his own feelings. The pause which succeeded was eloquence itself; Imogen was the first to dissolve the spell of dangerous silence. Gently drawing the book from his hand, she replaced it with a volume of Torquato Tasso, then with an air of playfulness said: "Were I Tasso, I should be sadly jealous of this monopolising Petrarch."

"Confess," said the baron, seizing her hand, "are you most anxious I should change the theme or the book?"

"Both, both," said Imogen: "to-day I am governed by the very soul of whim, and should have run through the Alexandrian library with as much rapidity as I am running through yours."

"Come, then, my charming Capriccio, I will read at random the very page you have opened." It was the beautiful sonnet "*Se d'Icaro leggeste e di Fetonte, &c. &c.*" and he read it with peculiar spirit and animation. "You

see," said he, closing the book, "these Italians live but to love, and make the object of their lives the theme of their writings."

"We must believe it indeed," said Imogen; "if Petrarch and Tasso are the just representations of their countrymen, there is, apparently, by this little specimen, a strong coincidence in their sentiments and writings."

"And in their lives a still stronger. Tasso, like Petrarch, was early in life forced to fly his native place, by the faction which disturbed it, and found a patron in Alphonso, the second duke of Ferrara, as did Petrarch in Coligni, and in the accomplished Leonora D'Este a Laura, but something more fortunate as a poetical enamorado. His sonnets have more of the fire of love than its pathos; yet his passion for the charming princess D'Este was the efficient cause of all the sufferings that pursued his chequered life; but he was beloved, and that sweet conviction was an imperishable source of felicity, of which even his enemies could not deprive him."

"I think I recollect the lady Magdelaine saying," returned Imogen, "she was at the court of Charles the Ninth when Tasso was introduced there by Luigi, the cardinal legate."

"Yes," said the baron, "it reflects *one* solitary beam of light upon the shadowy character of Charles, that he was sensible to the powers of genius. He received Tasso with the most flattering encomiums, and on his intercession pardoned a poet condemned to death for some heinous crime."

"We are so much the creatures of education, that 'tis possible, my lord, even Charles owed more of his vices to the example and precepts of those who surrounded him, than to the innate viciousness of his own disposition; let us at least hope it, for the honour of human nature."

"And you may add, of learning and taste; for Charles was by no means deficient in either. I believe he ranks among our royal authors; if his treatise on hunting can be allowed as a sufficient claim on the honours of authorship."

"Well, shall we go on with the amatory effusions

of Tasse, or reconnoitre the charms of Italian prose? Here is a collection of charming novelets by Bandello." He then (wholly intent on amusing his prisoner) read through the interesting tale from which Shakspeare has taken the happiest of his dramas, Romeo and Juliet. When he had finished, Imogen, the most animated of auditors, expressed her opinion of the story with justness and taste, and thanked the baron with expressions of the warmest approbation for his spirited and elegant translation.

"If indeed," said the baron, "this very loose translation possessed the merit you so flatteringly ascribe to it, I should have been less indebted for my inspiration to the author than my audtress, on whose patience I fear I have made very exorbitant demands; but" (with a sigh he added) "hours such as these are rarely sent, and the regret I should feel in being now obliged to relinquish the happiness they conferred would be less poignant, if I dared to encourage the hope that they would this evening return. That trumpet's shrill blast calls me to the duties of my profession; and an engagement to dine in the tent of the duke de Biron, will give me a tedious interval of uninteresting existence, whose apathy shall heighten, by contrast, those animated and elegant enjoyments, reserved for happier moments. Dare I," he added in a supplicating tone, "reckon on the return of these precious moments, so dear to the heart, the fancy, and the mind?"

Imogen, with great modesty, but with that air of peculiar *naïveté* which was all her own, and which ever gave point to her manners when her heart was interested, assured him the most tedious hours she should pass, would be those which should intervene till his return. Prudence and timidity hurried after the candid avowal of her heart; but it could not be recalled, and the conscious blush which succeeded it did but heighten its effect. The baron, silent, but not insensible, bowed his gratitude on her hand, too delicate in such a moment even to raise that fair hand to his lips, and left the tent. When he was gone, Imogen, throwing herself on a seat, cast a look round the tent; she did not think so confined and

Comfortable an apartment could wear so desolate an air as the absence of its master shed over it ; while even the chair he had occupied, the book he had turned down open on the table, assumed an interest from that circumstance, yet her wish of indulging unrestrained the flow of feeling and thought that agitated her mind, lessened her regret for his temporary absence. The visible change in his manners and conversation, so different from that of the former day, was the first object of her cogitation ; the impassioned sentiments of fervid and impetuous affection no longer burst in all the eloquence of love from his lips, but gave way to that playful easy strain of gallantry, which even indifference can assume, but which the serious energy of passion disdains to use ; while on the subject of his union with mademoiselle de V—— he was still mysteriously silent. His conversation, elegant and lively, appeared solely animated by the wish to entertain, apparently unconscious that it instructed and enlightened, while it interested and amused ; it was the effusion of a rich and intelligent mind, a refined and cultivated taste ; but Imogen thought of the impulsive dictates of an enamoured heart, which glowed in his recital the preceding day, and sighed—" Alas," said she, " how great is the inconsistency of the human heart, when agitated by the conflicts of reason and passion ; oh ! why should I regret what I should so highly approve ; why deplore what I should so devoutly desire ? This interesting, this noble and virtuous being is the destined husband of another, every way deserving of his tenderness and esteem : his gratitude to her, his duty to himself, his father, and his king, demand the sacrifice ; the *sacrifice* ! Oh Montargis, will it indeed be a *sacrifice* !— Foolish heart ! how eagerly dost thou believe what it would be misery supreme to doubt ; yet though this insuperable bar did not exist, the object of thy secret homage could ne'er be thine. Mayst thou with all thy keen and glowing feelings moulder in thy kindred dust, ere thy fond dotage impels Imogen de St. Dorval to plant a dagger where the wounds inflicted by the fatal love of Julia de Ribemont still rankles. Oh no ! break

with thy sufferings, but let thy last pulsation be the triumphant throb of virtue victorious over passion !”

Such was the train of reflection which agitated the tender bosom of the youthful prisoner, when the page, who had hitherto attended, spread an elegant collation ; and, like the subtle dwarfs which fairy love places near the beautiful persons of the enchanted damsels whom some magician holds in “*sad endurance*,” he hovered round her with wakeful attention, seemed to anticipate her wishes, and waited on her with the grace of a Gany-mede. His intelligent countenance and lively looks induced Imogen frequently to address him, and his respectful manners, with a certain air of arch pertinence, repaid her for the condescension in this instance, as in every other since she had been the prisoner of Montargis. Imogen recognised the most refined delicacy, a delicacy which never slumbered. She would have shrunk from the gaze of hacknied domestics, who, in the unhappy singularity of her situation, and the too pointed attention of the baron, might have found ample food for impertinent surmise and vulgar curiosity ; but from the careless simplicity of the youthful page, who seemed not to have attained his fourteenth year, she had nothing to apprehend. She had observed that whenever the baron withdrew or entered the tent, he always closely drew the curtain after him ; and that the page never left the outward apartment, which served as a kind of anti-chamber. The page, as usual, retired to his station when her solitary dinner was removed ; and to banish the constant and dangerous subjects of her thoughts from her heart and imagination, she took up the volume of Italian novels he had been reading ; and, from her perfect knowledge of the French and Latin languages, found no great difficulty in coming to the literal sense of the author. But the spirit, the interest, the pathos, which the florid and elegant translation of the baron shed over the story, no longer captivated her willing attention. She wondered she had even been amused, and recollected the poet who wrote execrable verses, but read them in so graceful a manner, and so melodious a voice, that what in perusal was contemptible, in recitation was en-

chanting; and one seducing idea of the fascinating reader of *Bandello* soon lured her attention from the author. Resigning herself to the sweet train of thought which love unallayed by every other sentiment awakened, she threw aside the book, and clasping her hands, flung them over the back of the chair on which she sat, and gently pressed them with a cheek rosed with the blush of health and passion, and dimpled with one of those tender frolic smiles which ever caught its spirit from some felicitous sensation.

The bodkin which fastened up her hair had given way, and her unconfined tresses fell in rich disorder over her neck and shoulders. Thus lost in sweet abstraction she had remained for a considerable time, when the broad mass of light which flushed through the scarlet curtains of the tent suddenly became obscure; and Imogen, raising her eyes to discern the cause, beheld it slowly withdrawn, and several heads appeared, each towering over the other, and all animated by an expression of surprise, curiosity, triumph, and admiration.

Imogen involuntarily uttered an exclamation of surprise, and arose in great confusion: the curtain instantly closed, and the groupe retired. Almost in the same instant the page entered: his face flushed, his consternation evident; falling at Imogen's feet he exclaimed:

"Lady, I am lost if you tell my lord." Imogen obliging him to rise, he continued: "Certainly I was to blame to leave the antichamber; but who could have foreseen? yet I promised my lord not to leave the tent; no, not for a moment: no gentleman would then have dared to intrude, because they knew I would tell the baron. But Antonine, the little drummer, so famous at quoits, was playing not fifty paces from the tent, and I left it for a moment. The gentlemen, who saw me, I suppose, took that opportunity."

Imogen, who now understood the cause of his terror, assured him she would conceal the circumstance from his lord, and asked who the intruders were?

The page's countenance brightening, he exclaimed: "Pardie, lady, they were no common intruders either. There was first, monseigneur the marquis de Sancy,

colonel of the Swiss guards; and my lord high constable de Montmorency, and the young count de Chateaufort, and some others. To confess the truth, lady, they have been all hovering about the tent since it was known that my lord's prisoner was a beautiful young lady of high quality, especially the marquis de Sancy, who is a rare pleasant gentleman as any in the camp. To-day he met my lord the baron coming out of the tent, and I heard him say it was not agreeable to the laws of war he should monopolise the richest spoil to himself, and prayed to be introduced to you. My lord looked grave, and said him nay. 'Then take care,' said the marquis, 'when the gallant king returns from Folambra he will shew himself as little of the *Scipio* as yourself, baron.' Yes, that was the word: on which my lord looked graver still, and said he was only waiting for an audience from the king to have you restored to your friends, who were of illustrious rank. Then he drew the marquis away by the arm, and I heard no more. But I am sure the marquis must have bribed the centinel to gain admittance, and if my lord knew it he would doubtless send him a cartel."

Imogen, extremely mortified and shocked, and who now saw her situation in a new and humiliating light, assured the page she would not betray him, and he retired satisfied and grateful: while the hint he had insinuated of the *cartel* determined her not to reveal the incident, which, however insulting to her, might endanger a life a thousand times more precious in her eyes than her own. At that moment the baron entered. Her recent agitation still flushed her complexion to its deepest tint, her beautiful hair still hung in negligent disorder, and the delightful emotions she had a moment before indulged in had not yet withdrawn their sweet and tender expression from her countenance. Coquetry would have triumphed in the wild and bewitching disorder which invested the air, the person, and manner, of the fascinating prisoner when the baron appeared.

"And whence this fresh blaze of beauty, my charming captive?" said he, gazing earnestly at her. "Have you

been on another embassy to Proserpine more propitious than the former?"

"No," said Imogen gaily, "I have only made an expedition to the regions of *Fancy*, and have not yet recovered from the influence of her inspirations."

"And if *Fancy* could boast of her own apotheosis, she would doubtless fix on thee as her high priestess, who equally feel and inspire her brightest visions. How rich would her altars then be in offerings, and how many who came to worship the deity would turn apostate, and adore the priestess."

"And you, my lord, I should suppose, were already invested with the sacerdotal stole, and presided among the high priests of gallantry over that court established in this province by your own provincial troubadours."*

"No," said the baron smiling, "I cannot boast of such an honour; but were faith and devotion sufficient to obtain it, I should rank high in the *album sanctorum* of love, for I am an enthusiastic devotee, capable of attaining to the most daring heights of amorous fanaticism, worshipping the deity in spirit and in truth; and, like the members of the Greek church, doing homage to the picture of my tutelar saint, not by prostration, but by a *kiss*." The baron drew a miniature from his bosom, and, having devoutly pressed it to his lips, presented to the eye of Imogen the lively resemblance of the *Novice of St. Dominick*! "Yes," said he, fondly gazing on it, "a saint from whose lips I first received the purest essence of true religion, and whose sublime sentiments, even at her feet, I vowed should be my orthodoxy."

A rapturous recollection flashed like lightning over the memory of Imogen, and she beheld herself in the gallery

* The *high court of love* was established in Picardy, the constant rival of Provence, by the troubadours. It had its *plaids et jeux sous l'ornel*, consisting of knights and ladies of high rank exercised and approved in courtesy, who assumed a judicial power in matters of the most delicate nature: nor did their decrees receive effect from the voluntary submission of the constituent members only; the general courtesy of the times stampd them with unquestionable authority, and the legislation itself did not refuse to sanction them with its approbation.

of Montmorell, the suppliant minstrel at her feet: for a moment she gazed in extreme emotion on the picture, while, as the baron again pressed it to his lips, a secret delight thrilled through her heart; but the sweet effusion was but transient, it faded before the chill suggestion of prudence, that the picture of the lady de St. Dorval should not remain in the possession of the baron de Montargis, the husband of the lady de V——, and she coldly said; "To have secretly drawn my picture, and to have bestowed it on another, was an unjustifiable action in Theodore: in you, my lord, it will be but an act consonant to your usual delicacy to restore it to the original."

"Or else," said the baron sportively, "I suppose you will cite me to appear in the high court of love, and oblige me to be tried by the decrees of the *preux* chevaliers and *praise* dames of which it is composed."

"Your gaiety, my lord," said Imogen, deeply wounded by what appeared to her agitated feelings the very levity of indifference, "is very enviable;" and, in spite of every effort to restrain them, the tears rushed to her eyes.

The baron started, the hilarity of his countenance fled, and, with a look of the strongest emotion, he pursued the pearly drops that stole down the cheek of Imogen, repeating in a tone of perturbation, "*My* gaiety! God of heaven! Enviable! Am I then so finished, so very finished an actor? has the necessity, the dreadful necessity, of self-subjection so stamp'd the traces of dissimulation on me, that I can appear nothing but the thing I am not? Oh God! why must I conceal a feeling from her by whom alone every feeling is governed? why can I not unfold my whole soul, oh Imogen! to thy investigation? Alas, no! coward like, I strive to conceal its weakness, its secret workings, its conflicting passions, even from my own observation. I strive to dream myself into delusion, and shun the truth with horror. I would fancy I am all I appear to be, and cheat my heart into the belief it bled not in anguish beneath the veil of this all-enviable gaiety. Enviable! merciful heaven! The wretch who, condemned to die a death of agony, yet clings in life's surviving hopes with a heart stretched upon the wheel of insupportable suspense, revels in bliss compared to

what *I* have suffered since thy presence has again revived those emotions, those sentiments, which fate vainly opposes, and which I hourly feel are interweaving their influence with my very existence. It is in vain I would have taught myself to forget thee; it was in vain I said *she can never be mine*; yet still thy idea, like the glowing mildness of an evening sun, stole o'er the horizon of memory, and sheds its vital beam on an heart which again from the sphere of love receives its every motion. Oh, Imogen! withdraw not this precious hand from me. It is not yet criminal to imprint on it the effusions of a soul, which from the moment I first beheld thee was all thy own: it is not yet criminal to gaze on that countenance, whose sweet intelligence betrays the union of our minds, the sympathy of our mutual feelings: it is not yet a crime to dare to love thee. A crime! O God! to love thee as thou art worthy to be loved, is to love virtue in its purest essence and fairest form!"

Imogen, overwhelmed, dissolved, amazed, struggling between the conflicts of duty, reason, pride, and love, released her hand, and faintly said: "My lord, you forget that it is the baron de Montargis who addresses the daughter of the count de St. Dorval; that it is the betrothed husband of the lady de V—— who ——"

"Forget!" interrupted the baron, "forget! Oh, would I could indeed forget! would I could indeed resign myself to the sweet illusion that I was still the *minstrel of Provence*, and thou the *Novice of St. Dominick*! Oh, Imogen! were such indeed our rank and lot in life, the heart, the imagination, luxuriate in the unambitious felicity which might have then been ours; then the baleful breath of hereditary discord had not blasted our opening joys; the chilling influence of interest had not frozen our blushing loves even in their spring of beauty; the daring views of self-rapt ambition had not trampled on the best affections of the heart, nor the stern voice of duty forbid that union which *love* had formed and virtue consecrated; all that this world can give of bliss had been ours, and the tender heart would have been spared the lingering torture of throbbing in sad despondency through countless ages of despair and sorrow!"

The baron had again taken the hand of Imogen, and as he concluded a burning tear dropt upon its snowy surface; that tear was indeed the eloquence of a heart whose feelings mocked the power of expression. Imogen impulsively pressed the hand which grasped hers, then turned aside her head and wept, faintly exclaiming: "Leave me! oh in mercy leave me!" The baron, seizing both her hands, imprinted them with an ardent kiss—"Imogen, one word, and I obey thee. Whence flow these tears? Spring they from a kindred source with those that filled my eyes? Imogen!—forgive!—but—dost thou indeed deplore the severity of that fate which drives me to despair? Weepest thou in pity or in love? Oh, Imogen!" gently insinuating his arms around her, and straining her to his breast, "do our hearts now beat against each other in all the kindred sympathy of passion, or do I feel the throb of thine less ardent than my own? Oh no! that glance was my assurance."

"Leave me, I supplicate," she faintly exclaimed, withdrawing herself from the baron's glowing fold.

"In a moment such as this, Imogen, leave thee! Oh, not for worlds!"

Modesty and pride took the alarm. "My lord, I *command* you to leave me!" said the daughter of de St. Dorval, in a voice full of dignity, and flinging the baron from her; who, catching her robe as she retreated, exclaimed: "Imogen, what is it you fear? Beaming in innocence, supreme in thy own strength, the radiant ægis of virtue shields thee equally from attain and danger."

"*But not from insult,*" returned Imogen indignantly, and retired to the inner division of the apartment, closely drawing the curtain which screened it.

The profound sighs of the baron only pierced this light barrier, which virtue honoured by virtue rendered inviolable. Not even by a word did he prophanè the silence offended delicacy imposed; and after having remained for a few minutes in the attitude Imogen had left him, his arms still outstretched to detain her, he rushed from the tent. When Imogen was assured of his departure, she flung herself on her couch, and, giving full scope to the tide of emotion that swelled her heart, wept tears of

real anguish. For the first time she considered the passion the baron professed for her as equally derogatory to her principles, her delicacy, and her pride.

"He has at last," said she, "dropt the veil. He confesses his tenderness, if it merits the title, had no object in view save the gratification of temporary propensity. From the first he *knew I could never be his*. Another had his vows, his respect, his gratitude; while I, all-believing, and all-deceived, was still considered as the object of idle dalliance, receiving with fond credulity avowals of unsanctioned love, my pride, my duty, my reason, should have rejected. But who would not have been deceived as I was, and doated on deception?" All the baron's perfections, his insinuating graces, his noble mind, his genius and virtues, rushed on her dissolving heart, and passion held a momentary triumph, but it was but momentary. "No," said Imogen, "I never can be his; he said it: but yet he knows me not; he knows not the powers of that mind, of which he has made the heart's weakness the criterion. *I will not languish through countless ages of despair and sorrow*. And yet; I could have loved him! could! oh God!—but it is over! I can also cease to love when virtue commands it. My passions are human, but I have no common mind, I feel I have not; I always felt it, even in the convent of St. Dominick, though all-dependent on the bounty of its members. My heart *shall* submit to my reason, though it burst in the struggle. My mother! my sainted mother! I will emulate thy virtues, and thy errors shall be my beacon; for thine also, like thy child's were the errors of love. And thou, my father, who lookest up to me for that beam of bliss that is to gild the evening of thy stormy life, thou shalt not look in vain." At the recollection of her father Imogen's tears flowed afresh, and his probable sufferings on her account rushed to her mind; while a keen self-reproach that so little of her thoughts had lately been devoted to him wrung her heart, and added to the conflicts of her mind.

CHAP. XVIII.

Most sacred fyre, that burnest mightily
 In living breasts, ykindled first above
 Among the eternal spheres and lamping sky,
 And thence poured into men, which men call *love*,
 Not that same which doth base affection move
 In brutish minds,
 But that sweet fit that doth true beauty love,
 And chuseth virtue for its dearest dame,
 Whence springs all noble deeds and never-dying fame :
 Well did antiquity a god thee doom.

SPENSER.—*Fairy Queen.*

To urge bold virtue's unremitted nerve,
 And wake the strong *divinity* of soul.

AKENSIDE.

IMOGEN had passed the night in restless agitation ; her transient repose was broken by starts of causeless horror, or by dreams of frightful import ; and when, towards the morning dawn, exhausted nature had plunged her into a deep and heavy sleep, she was suddenly awakened by a repeated discharge of fire arms that shook the couch on which she reposed. A new sense of danger assailed her heart. She had not taken off her cloaths the preceding night : she now rushed from her couch to the outward apartment ; it was empty, as was the antichamber.

The firing continued, and noise and tumult roared on every side. Imogen, breathless and panting, endeavoured to collect her scattered thoughts. Danger and the baron de Montargis alone presented themselves to her mind. At that moment the page entered, followed by an officer. He advanced to Imogen, and said : " The baron de Montargis, madam, commends him to you."

" He is safe, I hope ?" breathlessly interrupted Imogen.

" I hope so, madam," returned the stranger ; " but *this* is a post of danger. The besieged have made a *sortie* and a furious attack on one of the outposts, which the baron has been ordered to succour. As he mounted his horse he wrote a few lines on this slip of paper ; then

folding it round this trinket, which he said belonged to his illustrious prisoner, bade me to deliver it into her own hands; then rushed to the scene of action."

The officer presented the little packet to the trembling Imogen, and, with a respectful bow, retired. Imogen flung herself on a chair: for a moment deprived of all motion, she could not open the packet; at last her trembling hands unfolded it, something fell, she supposed it to be her own picture and let it lie on the ground, while she read the following billet:

"Fear not for thyself; the guardian spirit of innocence and virtue hovers round thee; the God of goodness is thy shield. I am rushing to battle, perhaps to death. If this hour is my last, it will be at least the most glorious of my life. Then commend thee to the king in person; he will restore thee to thy father: and give the inclosed a place in thy bosom, for in life or death its original was all thy own.

DE MONTARGIS.

"I cannot part with thy beloved resemblance until the heart which now beats against it shall cease to throbb. Again thine, for ever thine."

Imogen, almost lifeless, fell back on her chair. She seemed for the first time to feel *she loved*. Hope for a moment revived her failing senses.

"He is in no danger," said she; "the world he was born to serve, to adorn, to instruct, has yet great and unsatisfied claims on him; and Providence will spare him, as its best representative on earth!" She then took up the trinket; it was a small gold case, which opened by a spring, and Imogen beheld a beautiful and striking resemblance of the baron de Montargis in his minstrel habit. She pressed it to her lips and to her heart; and, while the firing continued with fresh force and awakened new fears, she dropt on her knees, her heart offered up prayers of supplication for the safety of its object, while every shot that reached her ear seemed to wound that tender anxious heart in its most vital-nerve. The firing at last ceased. She flew to the outward apartment, and

dispatched the page to learn if all was over, if his lord was safe; but before the boy returned the firing was again renewed, and Imogen again trembled, prayed, and wept. The boy at last returned.

"It is all over," exclaimed he joyfully; my lord has beat the *holtroons* back, and——" "*Is he safe?*" was all the trembling Imogen could utter. The page, losing the hilarity that animated his countenance, returned: "My lord is, I fear, sadly wounded. Just now, as he led a prisoner of great consequence to the king's tent, I perceived he walked with difficulty, he looked pale, and his scarf was bathed in blood."

Imogen clung to a chair for support; her heart died within her bosom; she attempted to speak, but her lips moved in silence. The boy, looking on her compassionately, said: "But I may be mistaken, lady. I will run and bring you a better account." He flew out of the tent, and Imogen sunk on the chair in a state of dreadful suspense, vibrating between hope and terror, alternately the prey of either; her eye tearless, her cheek pale, her hands clasped; near half an hour had elapsed when a footstep was heard on the outside apartment; the curtain was drawn, and the baron himself appeared.

His looks were haggard and ghastly, his complexion colourless, his arm bound in a scarf stained with blood. Imogen with a wild exclamation of joy and horror, sprung forward to meet him, and fell senseless at his feet.

The energy of her spirits, the strength of her feelings, vanquished the weakness of a frame greatly debilitated by the repeated agitations of her mind. She almost instantly recovered, and found herself supported in the baron's arms. With a look of tender inquiry she raised her eyes to his, but suddenly let them fall, abashed by the expression of his triumphant glance. The baron did not, *could not*, speak; his heart was too full to give expression to its feelings, though his whole soul swam in his eyes, and fluttered on his lips. He pressed the hand he held to his forehead and his heart; transport breathed in his short-heaved sighs, and delight and gratitude shone in his smiles. At that moment two surgeons, followed by some of the baron's attendants, en-

tered the tent. Imogen's fears again took the alarm, as with professional pomposity these gentlemen spread out as many bandages, instruments, &c. &c. as might serve a military hospital after a general engagement. Her cheek again grew pale, and she perceived not she was an object of more attention and observation to the bystanders than the baron himself. The baron, with a look full of eloquence, and in a low voice, entreated her to retire; but as the wound, though it had bled copiously, was but slight, and a little above the wrist; so that it was only requisite to tuck up the sleeve of his habit to dress it, Imogen's courage returned, animated by joy; and she smilingly said: "Are you then, my lord, so little versed in the rules of chivalry? Was there ever yet a brave and gallant knight who when wounded did not prefer trusting for his cure to the skill of some fair damsel than to *Æsculapius* himself?"

The baron only answered her gaiety with a smile full of expression, and she continued to hover round him with endearing attention, teasing the bandages and assisting the surgeons to bind up the wound, and saying repeatedly to herself, "Surely this I would do for a stranger."

Meantime the baron continued silent, but his speaking glance pursued her every motion. Imogen observed the paleness of his cheek, and she presented him a glass of cordial. He gently put it back, and said in a low voice: "Thou hast already presented me an *elixir*, the elixir of life itself."

Imogen, colouring and smiling, poured out a second glass, touched it with her lips, and, presenting him another, said:

"Do you then refuse to pledge me?"

The baron put aside the cup she offered with the air and look of an Hebe, and snatching the glass her lips had enriched, quaffed it off, and bowed on the hand to which he returned it.

The surgeons and attendants, with a look of important significance, retired. Their looks had not escaped the sensitive delicacy of Imogen: and when she again found herself alone with the baron, covered with confusion, she retired to a distant part of the tent; while the incident of

the preceding evening, and the sentiments and determinations it gave rise to, rushed across her mind, and stood opposed to the tender emotions of the present moment.

Artless and unsophisticated, equally the child of *nature* and of reason, she had not the power to conceal those feelings she had strength of mind to determine on subjugating. After a long and impressive silence, during which the baron's countenance betrayed the strongest agitation, he arose, and seating himself by Imogen, in a voice full of emotion, said :

"Imogen, the struggle is over, the victory is thine ! Thy virtue, thy tenderness, have effected what even thy beauty and thy genius could not accomplish. The prejudices of *sect*, the rancour of hereditary hatred, the influence of tyrannic duty, the fastidiousness of a false sense of honour, and the splendid lures of interest and ambition, all, all lie vanquished, and love, virtue, and Imogen, are alone triumphant ! Nay, sweet maid, hear me out in patience, then resolve, decide for me ; be thou my destiny, for in thy hands I place the future fate of my existence.

"Imogen, I left thee in a state of mind last night which it were vain to agitate thine by describing. It was a dreadful conflict : even now I shudder at the contest my reason and my heart, my duty and my love, sustained. Oh, Imogen ! give me thy pity, while I confess that I believed both reason and duty commanded me for ever to resign thee, for many a solemn tie had bound me to another ; and thou wert—the daughter of *St. Dorval* ! Yes, it was in the overflow of filial tenderness and filial duty, when my mind was weakened by suffering, and my frame debilitated by sickness ; when I sunk in my father's arms, oppressed by his tenderness as he wept tears of joy over his recovering son ; while the lovely preserver of my liberty and life stood beside us, shared in our transports, and mingled her tears with ours ; it was then I suffered my father to place my hand in hers, and—Oh, Imogen ! spare me the rest ; duty and gratitude triumphed, and thou wert—resigned !

"The day of my marriage with mademoiselle de V—— (who had merit and charms to awaken a passion

which I could never feel) was fixed. I had determined never more to behold thee; but from my father (who had so early made himself the master of the secret of what he termed my romantic passion) I had received a promise that previous to that momentous day, he would rescue thee from that cruel destiny which awaited thee, and provide for thee a comfortable independence.

"I had every reliance on the humanity of my father's heart, the rectitude of his mind, and I guaranteed his promise by a solemn vow that I would never give my hand to mademoiselle de V—— till it was performed.

"Both events were delayed by the perturbation of public affairs. My father and myself were obliged to follow the king to the sieges of Aix-la-Chapelle and Laon, and mademoiselle de V—— remained with her aunt at Paris. Then, Imogen, an accident the most extraordinary gave thee back to me in a situation the most interesting, the most heroic. The common-place qualifications of mademoiselle de V—— shrunk before the more than mortal virtues of my lovely heroine. Beaming in beauty, eminent in genius, supreme in virtue, at one moment I beheld thee opposing thyself to death in its most dreadful aspect, to save a new-found father's life: the next, all soul-dissolving softness, all bewitching insinuation, delicate though playful, reserved though tender, thy mind endued with more than manly courage, thy heart with more than woman's softness! Now, from thy lip of love, I caught the precept of wisdom and of knowledge; and now in a voice of spherical melody received the purest documents of sentiment and taste, while the unbidden blushes of thy modest cheek, the feeling throb of thy unsophisticated heart, contributed, with thy mind's intelligence and thy person's charms, to renovate a passion which time, absence, reason, and duty, might have faded into a dear and tender recollection of its once adored object, but which, at sight of thee, in all thy blaze of excellence, again seized on my heart with more than all its former power, circulates through every vital artery, and forms my very soul. Yet, Imogen, I checked the tide of passion, stifled every sigh, and strug-

gled with my wishes; and hadst thou still been cold, I had haply still been silent.

"But oh, my sweet friend! last night, that heart, whose soft pulsation answered to the throb of mine, that glance whose glowing beam shot hope and joy over every kindling sense.—God of heaven! sure it was an effort more than mortal, that in that ecstatic moment tore me from thee, or rather say it was thy better reason triumphed over mine. The night which succeeded to that moment of transient felicity was dreadful, my mind was torn by insupportable conflicts; the long and unrequited tenderness of an amiable woman, my honour so solemnly engaged, my duty to my father, to my king, opposed to love, to happiness, and Imogen. Oh, Imogen! thou whose every passion is the willing subject of thy reason; thou canst form no idea of that raging fever of the mind when struggling between the conflicts of the passion and the reason. Overcome by the contest, yet still undecided to which to assign the victory, in this moment of awful hesitation, I was called on for corporal exertion, when the mind was weakened and debilitated, for animal courage when moral vigour was subdued; yet the wild irritation of my feelings nerved my arm. I flew to the hottest spot in the scene of action, but not until I had interested my king in thy favour, not until I sent thee some faint remembrance of a love which, even in the moment when death hovered o'er me, filled my heart with thee alone.

"Yes, Imogen, even in the battle's fiercest fury thy image still pursued me, awakened a thousand tender fears for thy safety, suspended my up-lifted arm, and left my fame in danger: it was in a moment such as this I received this wound, oh! it was love himself inflicted it—precious wound! it is to you I owe that undisguised, that unreserved avowal of tenderness which nature, under the influence of terror, betrayed in thy fears for my safety; thy tenderness, thy anxiety, thy active solicitude, bind me thine for ever. Nay, my sweet friend, hear me out, bear with me yet a little longer; to break that inviolable contract my heart first made with thine would now alone be dishonour; all the persuasion I was

master of I used to win thy love, nor hast thou denied I was successful : thy happiness is now involved in mine ; my own I could sacrifice, thine I dare not, not even to gratify a father's *ambition*.

" No, there is no law, natural or moral, which obliges a child to offer himself, and what is dearer than himself, a voluntary victim on the altar of parental authority. I possess a free moral agency. I am capable of judging of what can constitute my own happiness or misery, and when virtue sanctions my views of the former, heaven itself would frown on its cowardly resignation, and virtue equally forbids me to abandon thee, or repay the tenderness and virtues of thy rival with hypocrisy and deceit ; oh ! say, shall I unite her destiny to that of a man who can only render her miserable as himself, or shall I requite the candid avowal of her love by feigning with counterfeit affection to return her tenderness ? or openly strike at her heart by that undisguised coldness and disgust which would be the result of a union so repugnant to mine ? No, I am not so accomplished a villain ; not yet so deeply plunged in simulation ; I am even still more to be pitied than condemned, more unfortunate than guilty. You, only, oh Imogen ! have I wronged, when I resigned thee whom heaven had assorted as my better self ; yes, I will fly to mademoiselle de V——, at her feet I will unfold every secret of my heart ; she is proud, she is generous, she will reject a hand, a person, unaccompanied by the heart ; her passions though strong are pliant ; I know her sensations seldom preserve a medium ; her character is composed of extremes, and the sentiments which will succeed to those she has already experienced, will take their energy from the overflowing of those which preceded them, and her indifference will soon become as marked as her former partiality. Some new object will awaken another romantic passion, and I shall be forgotten.

" Nay, a moment's patience, and I have done. I know thou wilt urge (that first great obstacle vanquished) our families' rooted hatred, the difference of our religion ; but the omnipotence of love and reason shall subdue their united force. Is not the essence of our faith the same ?

Are not thy sublime sentiments my orthodoxy? And for those idle ceremonies, framed to fascinate the vulgar soul, and win the faith through the medium of the senses, these thou wilt recant to satisfy the world's scruples: and for our fathers, are we not their *children*, their only children? And though their hearts in the first flush of anger cast us from them, yet, oh Imogen! the parent's heart is Nature's *throne*: *she* will exert her sweet prerogative, and give us back our tender claims. Then thou, more favoured than the herald dove of heaven's peace, shalt not only bear the *olive-branch* into our families, but also find a resting-place for thine own bosom. Meantime, until this blessed moment arrives, let us seize *this* golden opportunity. Another day makes Laon the king's, and disbands his officers from immediate duty. On the skirts of the forest of Ardennes I possess a sweet retreat, mine by my mother's right. Thither, oh Imogen! let us fly from a world I know *thou* despisest, and I no longer prize. Let us renounce its cares, its errors, its prejudices, and its contentions: imparadised in sweet seclusion, all possessing and all possessed, let us snatch the wreath of bliss, which fate suspends o'er our heads, ere time withers its freshness: let us quaff the cup of rapture ere experience poisons its sweets. Loving and beloved, delighting and delighted, we will chasten the ardour of passion with the delicacy of sentiment, and strengthen its powers by the reciprocal communion of the mind's intelligence. Mutually exerting ourselves in the cause of virtue, the happiness we bestow on others shall be reflected back on ourselves. Our souls, burning with equal ardour to attain to the summit of human excellence, and to diffuse it, shall mingle and combine their forces, and act with incessant energy in the cause of reason and benevolence. Superior to those fatal prejudices from which the sufferings of mankind emerge, the spirit of truth shall fill our minds, and our precepts and examples shall disseminate its salutary effects. Thus rich in virtue and in love, our state will be that of the beatified, and *that* heaven shall be ours of which faith and fancy do but dream."

The baron ceased, apparently overcome by that pic-

ture of virtuous felicity he had sketched in such warm tints; while his eager and enraptured eye pursued the varying expression of Imogen's countenance, which so finely portrayed the corresponding emotions of her heart. Now transport's throb heaved her bosom with the wildest palpitation, and the languor of passion swam in her melting eye: now the spirit of virtue sublimed their glance, and kindled all their fire. Now the blush of love faded on her cheek beneath the oppressive joys which seized her imagination: and now the energy of virtue diffused a deeper glow. Alternately the mistress or the heroine, all impassioned or all sublimed, dissolved, elated, overwhelmed, she remained for a considerable time lost in the delirium of her heart and imagination.

The baron, who construed her silence, her abstraction, her great and visible emotion, into a tacit ratification of his heart's fond wishes, fell at her feet, and, seizing both her hands, raised his eyes to heaven, and exclaimed: "*Thou art mine!*" and here in the face of heaven I swear ——"

Imogen released her hand, placed it on his lips, and almost breathless faintly interrupted him.

"Forbear, my lord!" she exclaimed, assisting him to rise, "you know not what you do. One moment forbear! and ——"

"Imogen, what meanest thou?" he tremulously demanded.

"Give me, my lord, give me but one moment, and then! ——"

She arose in great perturbation, walked up and down the tent with a varying pace; her heart throbbed with violence, her colour successively changed from white to red; by degrees her agitation subsided, an air of dignity gradually involved her whole form, the varying expression of her countenance assumed the character of self-confidence reposing on the united strength of reason and virtue; her *mind*, with all its native and uncommon powers, was for the first time called on to reveal its force: she felt the solemnity of the appeal, and triumphed in her conscious ability to answer it. The sentiments, the determinations, of the preceding night, rushed to her

memory, and strengthened the weakness of her heart. She approached the baron with a mild and steady countenance ; then, seating herself opposite to him, she said with a gentle smile :

“ My lord, I have to thank you for this patient endurance of emotion, perhaps too weakly indulged, and not without difficulty repressed ; for though I have listened to you in silent attention, yet it was with amazement, and sometimes perhaps with a stronger, more tender sentiment. Yes, I will confess that my heart entered but too deeply into those visionary schemes which yours so strongly, so dangerously, delineated ; and my mind became the willing captive of the sophistry of yours. To me, my lord, you have unfolded every sentiment of a heart for the possession of which, sanctioned by virtue, by duty, and by reason, I would barter the empire of the world, and think the purchase cheap.” Imogen for a moment paused, the colour heightened in her cheek, she sighed, and continued :

“ Whatever were my native endowments, the unalienable possessions of my nature, I was ignorant of their power and extent until I first knew you, my lord. Till that period, perhaps the most momentous of my life, I knew not I had a heart so rich in sweet emotion, feelings capable of such profound sensibility, so alive to woe, so awakened to bliss ; for till then nor woe nor bliss had e’er assailed me ; my life a long dead calm, joyless though serene, uninteresting though unruffled, stole on in listless apathy, undelighting and undesired. Each day promised but the literal *echo* of that which had expired : I beheld its birth with indifference, and only felt a joy when its wearisome and oft-told round had crept into oblivion. I pressed my nightly pillow with no fond recollection to warm my dream ; or if I dreamed of happiness, I wakened in amazement, and wondered if indeed it *could* exist, save in a dream. Then I rose without a hope to gild the coming hours, and wished for night to sleep and dream again. You came, my lord, in humble seeming came ; but your mind scoffed at disguise, and you were still yourself. The attractive force of sympathy drew us to each other ; the intelligence of thy

mind called forth the better qualities of mine, and my soul in its progressive expansion did but emulate the grander elevation of yours. Immured from all kindred association, I resembled a flower sown by some vagrant breeze in a soil uncongenial to its nature: drooping in the shade which chilled its growth and veiled its blushes, but permitted to receive the sun's nurturing glow, it lifts its languid head and betrays its blushing colours to the radiant beam. You came, my lord, and said, *Let there be light, and there was light.* Then each day was pregnant with interest, life assumed a new and lovelier aspect: I rose with the fond expectation of tasting joys more exquisite than those I had already experienced, and at night I pressed my pillow with the recollection of the day's events throbbing at my delighted heart; sweet was the dream of my rest, but sweeter still the awakening thought which chased it from my pillow. Your rank in life I then thought inferior even to my own, all humble as it was; but with me you stood superior and alone: or if in the scale of human creation I assigned you a place, it only gave me a higher opinion of the species to which *you* belonged than in my moments of warmest philanthropy I had dared to indulge in. Had I then possessed the empire of the world, it had been thine. The empire of my heart was all I owned, and I bestowed it on thee. Then would I have flown with thee to the remotest corner of the earth, gladly have shared thy sorrows or thy joys, assuaged thy sufferings or exalted thy pleasures."

"Imogen! Imogen!" wildly interrupted the baron, unable to repress the ecstasy of his heart.

"For then, my lord," continued Imogen firmly, without suffering him to proceed, "society had no claims on me which (standing in the relation to each other I then believed we did) could have been injured. Desolate and alone, deserted by the world, and ignorant of its opinions or its laws, an alien from my birth, *you* would have been *my world*; in you all those ties so dear to the human heart would have been united; and in joining my destiny to yours I should have violated no duty, betrayed no trust, committed no injury. But now, my lord, the sweet illusion is vanished. Hadst thou been still but the min-

strel of Provence, haply even still the daughter of de St. Dorval had been thine ; but as the baron de Montargis—never !”

“ Never ! God of heaven ! Never ! Oh Imogen ! beware—thou ——”

“ My lord, I entreat you will hear me out. Since we parted in the gallery of Montmorell an extraordinary change has taken place in my situation. I am no longer an alien, unconnected, deserted ; the important scene of life is open to me ; I have received the part allotted me to perform ; and however frail, however weak the secret movements of my heart, my actions at least shall not sully the dignity of the character I am to sustain. I owe a duty to society which I will not betray. Yes, I will respect those social bonds which draw mankind together, nor, by resigning myself to the overwhelming influence of passion, afford the young, the thoughtless, and the imprudent, an example to justify their own improper conduct. (The duty I owe my father I will never sacrifice to the gratification of my own propensities ; I will not again rob him of a child so lately found, so long deplored ; I will not abandon his arms in the moment when they open with tender longings to receive me ; nor will I, under the influence of an unhappy passion, visit back his early errors on his head, and make the crimes of the child the father’s dreadful retribution : no, when I forsake my father *may God forsake me*. To you, oh my lord, what do I not owe to you ? A love that formed my heart’s first, best blessing ; the sacrifice of your ambition, your prejudices, oh God ! even of your filial duty, your probity, and your honour ; for me you would violate them all. And shall I take a treacherous advantage of your love ? shall I assist you to perpetuate those feuds which have so long disunited our families ? shall I tear you from your father’s heart, and plant another dagger in the wound my mother’s fatal passion inflicted ? shall I seduce you to sully that honour so immaculate, to violate a promise so solemnly made, and to break the heart of an amiable and affectionate woman, to whom you owe every thing, and who looks forward to a union with the object of her first tenderness as the consummation of her

happiness, the reward of her long tried constancy! No, my lord, never! And here *I* swear in the face of heaven ——”

“Imogen, Imogen, drive me not mad!” wildly exclaimed the baron, snatching her clasped and uplifted hands; “make me not hate thy dazzling virtues.— Thinkest thou, wondrous but insensible woman, that I am more or less than man, that thus you dare to tamper with my heart, my reason, and my passions? Is it thus thou wouldst tear thy image from my soul by fastening round it, even in all thy amiable severity, with more than all thy former power? Oh! if indeed thou wouldst teach me to sacrifice every hope of happiness to prudence (for reason exacts no such self-immolation) invoke me not with those melting eyes; preach not to me the rigid laws of fastidious virtue, with the look, the eloquence of angels; nor, whilst thou wouldst have me worship thee as a saint, make me adore thee as a woman. Recal in mercy to me and (suffer me to say) *to thyself*, recal that half-breathed vow which the *fanaticism*, not the moderate spirit, of virtue elicited. Or if thou wilt not retract what thou hast already uttered, let that vow to heaven be— that thou art mine for ever.”

“That, my lord, I cannot be, even on *your* terms, since *they* included a recantation of religion; for though thou knowest in the very region of superstition I laughed at her sopperies and her errors, even with her professional votaries, yet since my public apostacy would wound my father’s heart (deep-wedded to the religion of his ancestors) in its most vital nerve, I will not make it; for I am more certain it is an act of true religion to avoid wounding a tender parent’s heart, than I am of any speculative point of faith whatever.”

“Then cancel that demand in thy articles of capitulation,” said the baron with reviving spirits, “and thy God shall be my God. Imogen, ’tis in vain thou wouldst throw me from thee, for in spite of all thy prudent scruples thou wilt still be mine.”

“Then, my lord,” said Imogen with firmness and dignity, “claim me openly from my father; for the duty I owe myself, independent of every other, will prevent

me creeping meanly into a family which would reject me with contempt."

"Imogen, you wish to drive me to distraction, to wrench from me the hope of being beloved, as well as the certainty of being rejected. Away with that air of proud and conscious virtue. No, madam, it is not *virtue*, it is indifference, which furnishes you with these all-prudent arguments. You bid me claim you from your father, because you know the count de St. Dorval would spurn me from his feet, if even there I kneeling sued him for his daughter. By heavens, lady, you trifle with my passion, and use me like a froward child, now soothed and now corrected in its follies."

The baron arose and paced the tent in great perturbation. Imogen, trembling at his violence, held out her hand to him, and faintly smiling through her tears, exclaimed: "Oh! these *are not* your sentiments; that too ardent affection which so candidly breathed its existence to your ears cannot be doubted. Alas! my lord, ere the secret of my heart was unfolded to myself, thou wert its master."

"Imogen," said the baron, calmed and softened by her tender address, and taking her offered hand, as he seated himself by her, "Imogen, forgive me; I know not what I say. I do not, dare not, doubt the existence of thy affection. Hast thou not (oh dear confession!) condescended to own I once might have been *all the world to thee*. Oh! let us still, my lovely friend, be all the world to each other. Thus prostrate at thy feet let me supplicate, let me implore thee, not to annihilate, by ill-timed caution, that wondrous happiness we might enjoy by living for each other, and mutually exerting ourselves in the cause of virtue."

Imogen, almost overpowered by the energy, the passion, of the baron's manners, and by arguments but too consonant to the tone of her heart's secret wishes, yet still struggling to support herself through the difficult part that virtue and reason commanded her to support, faintly exclaimed: "Rise, my lord; that humiliating attitude is mockery to me and to yourself." The baron arose; an angry blush glowed on his cheek. "Yes," continued

Imogen firmly, "*we will* mutually exert ourselves in the cause of virtue, but that can never be promoted by our union, except there is a virtue in sacrificing every consideration to our own desires, in breaking the heart of a tender parent, in violating a sacred promise, in perpetuating an hereditary discord, in ——"

"Pardon me, madam," interrupted the baron coldly; "we are arguing on unequal terms: you from the head, I from the heart, from the feelings, and cannot stoop to sarcasm. My ideas of virtue are not so very arbitrary as you appear to imagine; they do not vary with the dictates of my passion, they are perhaps fixed and immutable as your own. I have done; I cannot combat the sophistical arguments of a brain so fertile in conjuring up phantoms to scare the soul's most ardent wishes."

"Oh no; my dear, my best friend," exclaimed Imogen, again taking the hand he had withdrawn from hers; "give but thy understanding a moment's sway, and it will tell thee what I have urged are not *phantoms*, but the palpable beings of *reason's* own creation."

"And is true, fervent, and unalterable passion," said the baron, half tenderly, half reproachfully, "so very subservient to the influence of the understanding? Can its vital glow chill in the heart at the suggestion of reason, and its throbbing pulse cease to beat when prudence commands? Oh Imogen, you have never loved—by heavens, never!"

"Never!" faintly repeated Imogen, turning her melting eyes full on him with a reproachful and tender smile; "Never!"

"Oh! forgive, forgive," said the baron, pressing her folded hands to his eager lips. "Imogen, it is *you* who drive me wild; then bear with the effects of your dangerous influence. Yes, it is a heart, a soul, tender, ardent, exalted as thine, that is alone capable of receiving the divine impression of love. Yes, you *have loved*: that sublime, that profound sentiment has penetrated your whole being; even now it irradiates thy looks, glows on thy cheek, and sheds an air of divinity around thy whole person. Oh, Imogen! can I then resist the precious heart thou hast enriched me with? can I tamely cede

the inestimable felicity it bestows on me? Think my beloved friend, of the ties which unite us, the unity of our minds, the reciprocity of our sentiments, the sympathy of our souls, and ——”

“Oh cease, cease, my lord, in mercy cease,” exclaimed Imogen in great emotion. “Why, by these arguments, which flow only from thy heart, wouldst thou deceive thyself and me? Consider for a moment the barrier which fate has placed between us. No, never, never can I be thine.”

“Never! Imogen, it is indifference only could prompt *that* assertion. Love assured by love never despairs.— When the heart reposes on the tenderness of a kindred heart, its fair hopes are never blighted. Love, mutual love, is omnipotent; it is its own destiny.”

“When love is opposed by virtue, my lord, it is not omnipotent; it is only in alliance with it, it is all-powerful. This transient gust of passion over, ——”

“Transient gust!” repeated the baron with acrimony: “but it is well. Yet trust me, lady, all-indifferent and cold as now I see thou art, thou art not so all-indifferent as thou wouldst believe. No, whate’er thy pride may urge, thy prudence dictate, in confirming *my* misery *you* will not secure your own happiness. Imogen, Imogen, be thy heart the umpire between us, and it will tell thee we were formed for each other. And oh, my too reasoning, too prudent friend, when by this resistance to our mutual felicity, destiny shall for ever, ever part us; when death itself can only place a stronger barrier between us; when we shall have beheld each other, heard each other, for the last, last time; when another shall claim those vows *our* eyes once so fondly interchanged; even when the diffidence of infant love shrinks from all other communication, and our hearts, mutually thrilling with the lingering ardour of their first immutable passion, shall shrink from the ——”

“My lord, my lord, I’ll hear no more!” interrupted Imogen in an agony of mind that mingled in her countenance all the ardour of the most refined, the most glowing passion. Struggling with the nearly-overpowered resolves of virtue and of reason, “Save me,” she

cried, while tears dried on her burning cheeks; "oh, De Montargis, save me from thee, from myself."

The baron caught her in his arms. "The contest is over," he exclaimed. "These tears, these blushes, are love's own concession, and thou art mine for ever!"

For a moment, one moment only, love was indeed victorious. On the next, Imogen had released herself from the baron's embrace, and, falling on her knees, in a solemn but rapid voice she exclaimed: "I swear by all I hold most sacred, never to receive the baron de Montargis as my husband, while our parents live, but with their mutual consent."

Then wholly overcome by the conflict, the emotion, the struggle she had sustained, she fell pale and lifeless at the baron's feet. Every feeling, every sensation in the breast of de Montargis, was absorbed in that the late effort of mind, and the situation it had thrown her into, awakened. He hung over her with the tender fears, the same intense anxiety, as the mother who trembles for the fluttering life of the infant that droops on her nurturing bosom. In delicacy to his prisoner he dared not call for assistance, and he was almost incapable of rendering any himself. Imogen, who, though overcome by corporal weakness brought on by mental suffering, was not senseless, made an effort to shake off the weakness that pressed her to the earth. The baron raised her in his arms. Imogen gently extricated herself and tottered to a seat; while a faint and eloquent smile, and a slight motion of the head, seemed to deprecate that bodily infirmity in which the mind had no share.

"Fear not," said the baron in a low and affecting voice as she appeared to shrink from his approach: "thou hast nothing more to fear from my importunity, since I have now nothing more to hope. I will at least endeavour to emulate that excellence I dare never expect to attain. Oh, Imogen! more omnipotent in thy virtue than even in all the lustre of thy genius and thy charms, I submit: thou hast conquered. Yes, I resign thee; yet to the end of time I shall persist in thinking thee mine by the most sacred ties that bind soul to soul. In another and a better world I will reclaim thee, and the heaven which forma-

ed us for each other will then smile upon our *eternal reunion*."

The baron's voice faltered ; emotion checked his utterance. Imogen wept bitterly, and extended her hand towards him. He held it for a moment alternately to his forehead and his heart ; then pressing it to his lips, dropped on it a burning tear, and suddenly letting it fall, covered his face with his mantle, and rushed out of the tent.

